

THE GREAT ADVENTURE



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THE GREAT ADVENTURE

The Great Adventure

BY

LOUISE POND JEWELL

NEW YORK


FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

B1444
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 September, 1911

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Foreword

WE were sitting before the glowing logs of a great open fire, my guest and I, enjoying the little week-end visit, while the February winds howled without. Suddenly she shivered involuntarily, and said, with a half-laugh,

“Someone is walking over my grave!” Then she added, in real earnest, “How I hate it! How I dread it—the grave, the earth, the cold, the aloneness! The thought almost drives me wild, sometimes!”

“But it won’t be *you*,” I philosophized lamely.

“Oh, I know all there is to be said,” she shook me off, “but I can’t get away from it. The thought always haunts me—that

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this warm flesh will be cold and inert, this body, palpitating with life and feeling and emotion, will be put down, alone, in the ground, and the earth heaped upon it! 'Dust to dust'—I never forget it completely for a moment. In church I sit and look at the hundreds of faces, glad and sad, proud and humble, haughty and sweet, and pity them all; for I say in my heart, 'You all must die some day, and be buried in the ground!' "

I looked at her in astonishment; that she, so gay, so cheery, seemingly so thoughtless, should be speaking thus!

"Do you suppose that many people feel as you do?" I asked. "I shouldn't have suspected that you had ever given a thought to the subject of death. Do others, too, carry this dread in secret, do you think?"

She reached out for a section of the big Sunday edition of the staid metropolitan newspaper that was lying near. Across

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one whole page, in great capitals, these words were printed:

THE HAUNTING TERROR OF ALL
HUMAN LIFE

IT IS THE DREAD OF DEATH, SAYS
PROFESSOR METCHNIKOFF.

SHALL WE EVER
ESCAPE IT?

“You see,” she said, “I am not the only one. Probably most people feel the same way. How, indeed, can they escape it?”

As she spoke, appealingly, wistfully, my mind flew back to the life of one I knew in former days, who did escape it; who not only had no fear of death, but who, looking forward eagerly at each turning of her life to the coming possibilities, with the confidence of one expecting a precious gift, saw in the episode called death the most joyous turning of all.

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On the assumption that my guest may be right—that there are others, perhaps many, who are troubled and depressed by the fear of what is called the “last great enemy”—this slight sketch is given of the life of one who never knew that fear, in the hope that the story of her gladness may make others less sad.

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She who was the heart
And hinge of all our learning and our loves.
—WORDSWORTH

I

SHE must have had a vivid personality, even as a little girl. I remember well the dramatic suspense and expectation that marked her first entrance upon the stage of my acquaintance with her. We had just moved to Detroit; and I, in the manner of childhood of that day (and for aught I know, of this day, too), became informally acquainted with the other boys and girls on the "block" through joining in the games played on sidewalks, and in front door-yards. But I noticed that whenever the finest plans, the nicest games, the greatest "larks," were suggested, they were always

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put off with the words, "Oh, we can't do that without Carroll!" or, "Wait till Carroll comes!" or, "When Carroll comes back we'll do—thus and so." I never questioned the finality of this decree. I never asked "Why?" In the dumb and wondering manner of childhood, I accepted the ruling as undebatable, and joined in the commonplace round of pursuits considered allowable in the absence of this unknown and wonderful arbiter of childish destinies.

For a long time I supposed Carroll to be a boy; and only by chance I found out that she was a girl, and about my own age. Then I built fancies around her; she must be very pretty, very rich, and very much a leader—"bossy," I probably phrased it to myself. When, after what seemed an interminable time of almost suspended animation, she finally swooped down gaily upon our stolid little band, my castle of cards suddenly collapsed. I found her a very

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ordinary-looking little girl; not pretty at all, but with a small, eager face, a thin little figure not over well-dressed, and a manner of joyous *cameraderie* that precluded any possibility of "bossiness" from the start.

"Is this *Carroll*?" I asked myself.

But though I marveled at first, and though I probably never, as a child, analyzed the secret of her leadership, I soon recognized the fact of it, and felt as absolutely as did the others that she was the heart and soul of all games worth playing, of all mischief worth venturing on, of all talks that had fun and sparkle in them; in short, that without her we were without what we would have called "the go." She had a quick, glad way and she loved so to do everything, that even Isaac Franz, given by us the cruel sobriquets of "Fatty," and "Dutch," roused himself into some semblance of human childhood, and imagined he was having a good time when he went wheez-

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ing and puffing through the parts she assigned him in our games.

As I look back upon that far-away time, I see in it a prophecy of our later years. I do not remember that Carroll was especially loved by anyone but me. Like sunshine, she was necessary, she was the very spirit of play, we should have been lost without her; yet, like many leaders, she missed the more personal intimacies and friendships that fell to the lot of less gifted ones and of those less useful to the many. But my own silent admiration for her, and to a certain extent, too, understanding of her, began even then, and continued until—when? Perhaps, in view of her attitude towards life and death, I should say they continue yet.

There sat the Shadow, feared of man.

—TENNYSON

II

HER earliest recollection was of living, outside the city limits, in a great, barn-like house, set in the midst of several acres of uncultivated garden; a house of big, scantily furnished rooms and uncanny, silent corners; a dreary enough place for a little girl without brothers or sisters to be brought up in. But to Carroll it was always a palace; and she played blithely about in the empty rooms, and amongst the tangle of neglected shrubbery, happily unconscious of the fact that through the unpracticality of a visionary artist father the big ancestral estate had gone to ruin, and, under mortgages and mismanagement, was fast slipping through his fingers.

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To Carroll the place was never sad nor gloomy nor deserted. For her it was peopled with "pretend" playmates and friends and fairies, and the grounds with elves and sprites and nymphs. It was not until she was five years old, at the ecstatic time when the little sister arrived, that she realized that her sum of happiness had not always been complete. Then, for six months, life was so wonderful and so splendid that the "pretend" friends and companions of the past sank into oblivion. The tiny newcomer, so fair, so sweet and cuddly, with its real eyes that opened and shut; its little hands that clasped one's finger; its soft, soft hair, that one might touch lightly with the forefinger—at the same time raising a comrade's eyes to the mother's face, as if to say, "Don't we think she's sweet?"—the round, rose-leaf cheek; the dear, limp little arms; even the real cry, that desecrated the solemn silences of the respectable old house;

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the actual daily possession of all this seemed to Carroll an experience almost unbelievable. Sometimes she got up at night, and stealing softly to the crib in her parents' room stood on tiptoe so as to reach in over the top with caressing hand, and so make sure that the miracle was still there.

For Carroll, though she had not known it, had been much alone, and life for her now was absolutely transfigured by this experience of a real human love and interest.

Then came an awful day, the memory of which was a confused blur of fear and nameless dread; of being pushed aside whenever she came near the little group that hung round the baby sister's cradle; of being told to "run out and play," when she asked one after another,

"Please tell me what is the matter? Mayn't I please speak to baby sister?"

That day had held a long pain of waiting about, outside in the shrubbery, in trem-

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bling fear of she knew not what calamity, and then later— Carroll could never tell me about what happened during the next two days. She saw nothing of the little sister; her mother sat and wept, and her father tried in vain to comfort her. One room was locked and Carroll was told she must not try to go in; and to her oft-reiterated question, "Where is she—won't you please answer just that?" she received only the response, "Hush—she is dead!" which told her nothing.

After these two days had passed, the locked door was opened, and many people came to the house and silently entered that darkened room. Carroll, too, was led within by the old family servant, and seated near the door. In the middle of the room, on the marble-topped center table stood a long, narrow little box. The man whom Carroll knew well as the gentleman who did all the talking in the church she was taken

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to, each Sunday, rose beside the little box, and read from a book that she knew, from his solemn tones, was the Bible; then he talked and prayed, and all sang, and almost everyone cried.

Then the people went out, first walking past the box in the middle of the room, and looking at it. And then old Elsa, who had Carroll in charge, asked her if she wanted to look, too. Of course she did; and they went up to the box, and Carroll stood on a little hassock so as to be able to reach up far enough, and looked in.

With a cry of mingled amazement, joy and terror—"Why, here's baby sister!"—she raised her eyes to the face of the servant, then to those of her father and mother; the situation was inexplicable; the little sister lay before her, but the friends about her wept, and a nameless terror was upon her.

The events of the rest of the day seemed branded upon the child's heart, and she

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never, even in her later wholesome and joyous view of all things, could speak of them without trembling. No one told her, no one thought of explaining; she was a horrified spectator of the pageant that followed: the screwing on of the lid of the box; the drive, in darkened carriage, to a remote garden of white "statues"; the halt; the standing, in a keenly cutting snow-storm, before a mound of earth and a deep hole in the ground; then, before her agonized sight, the lowering of the box into that freshly dug hole—the box in which she knew her treasured little sister lay. Childhood often endures its tragedies in a silence as profound, through ignorance and inarticulateness, as is that of mature years through stoicism, philosophy, or religion.

But when the sad little company returned home, Carroll's lips were loosed.

"I want my baby sister! I want her!" she wailed.

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Then the mother turned for the first time to attend the child that was left her. She took Carroll in her arms and offered to comfort:

"Baby's soul is with God, Carroll," she said, between her own tears, "and if we—"

"I don't care anything about her soul—" interrupted the child, tempestuously. "I want to see *her*!"

"Oh, hush, hush, Carroll, you mustn't talk that way! You ought to be very thankful that God is taking care of our precious little one's soul for us, and that she will not have to go through all the suffering and trouble of this life!"

"Then why are you crying, mother, if you are glad? Oh," she sobbed, repudiating argument, "I don't want to talk about it! I just want her!"

No one happened to think that the word "soul" was a new one to the little girl; children ask a thousand trivial questions, but

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often ponder in strange silence over the difficulties that sometimes a word might clear away—and sometimes a philosopher be powerless to remove.

A lovely apparition sent
To be a moment's ornament.—WORDSWORTH

III

FROM the day of her sister's death, Carroll lived in a darkened world. The fairies no more danced in the motes and sunbeams, the "pretend" playfellows no longer beguiled her hours; she walked around the garden quite alone, and even the bird-notes of the returning spring sounded sad and pitiful. As has been the experience of many an older person, the blessing that had come for awhile into her life had revealed a need she had not known existed; and, departing, had left a void not to be filled by occupations and joys that had formerly been absolutely satisfying. The little girl was very lonely.

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One day a new interest came into her life. As she walked up and down the length of the long picket fence at the front of the dreary old garden, peeping through at the rare passers-by in the outside world, a vision of beauty dawned upon her sight. A little girl, not much older than herself, was mincing along the sidewalk in the direction of the town. She was a very prim little girl, in stiff, starched skirts that stood out proudly and rattled as she walked. She wore patent-leather slippers with toes turned correctly outward, she carried a little purse of great distinction in her hand. But more than all this, she was a child of charm and elegance. She had a haughty little face, with brown, unsmiling eyes, a scarlet mouth that seemed to Carroll so sweet that she would like to kiss it, and, best of all, long auburn curls, reaching nearly to her waist. Surmounting this wondrous hair was a hat of many ribbon

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bows, and above that a dainty little sunshade, carried at the prettiest conceivable angle. Carroll, conscious of her own plain little face, her short-cropped hair, her gingham pinafore, her high black boots with "copper" toes, beheld this embodiment of grace and beauty with childish rapture, tinged with awe.

Not presuming to address a being so superior, she contented herself with walking along on her own side of the fence, like a little sheep, keeping pace with the beautiful child without, who vouchsafed to her never a glance. All too soon the long stretch of fence was passed by the auburn-haired one, who went intrepidly on her way, apparently unconscious of the almost reverent regard which from within the dilapidated garden accompanied her progress. Carroll, with small face pressed between the unyielding pickets, followed her with adoring eyes as long as she could, then desperately

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climbed one of the square gate-posts, and there, perched at a dangerous height, caught another last blissful glimpse of the vanishing loveliness.

Then she descended, and for the rest of the day she dreamed. It is easier to "pretend" about a lovely vision of flesh and blood than about fairies and elves, that one knows all the time do not really exist at all. "My little new friend," she called the child with curls to herself, made bold, by distance, to the delicious point of familiarity. All that day they played together in her fancy. Sometimes the little stranger was a princess, sometimes only a very, very rich heiress; but she was always real and human, not a fairy-tale personage, though always far above Carroll, who even in play would not presume to consider herself the equal of so much elegance.

The next day a great thing happened; in fact, the very same thing that had happened

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the day before! Once more the strange child walked by, and once more Carroll accompanied her, on her side of the fence, in silent, worshipful admiration. Once more, at the last, she mounted the gate-post, and looked long after the retreating figure, until it disappeared.

That day a determination came to her that made her catch her breath because of its sheer audacity. "If she comes to-morrow I will speak to her!" she said to herself.

But it seemed such a tremendous step to take, that secretly she wondered if her courage would be equal to the deed when the crucial moment should arrive.

The morning came. Carroll perched herself on watch an hour before the time—and no little girl came! It was a heavy disappointment, and the day was a blank. But, on the day following, her heart was once more set a-flutter by the approach of the auburn curls, the furbelowed hat, the

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fashionable parasol, the pretty face, the stiff little skirts, the outward-pointed patent-leather toes.

Primed almost to suffocation with her great resolve, Carroll kept pace with the little stranger almost to the end of the fence. Then, blushing a furious red, she gathered together all her courage, and said shyly, in a soft little voice that could scarcely be heard, for its trembling,

“Little girl, what is your name?”

The wonderful one turned towards her, and replied, without an instant's hesitation,

“Mind your own business!”—instantly following up this piece of advice by the proffer, as far as it would reach, towards the child behind the fence, of a very red, narrow little tongue.

Thus, summarily, ended the great romance. It is unnecessary to describe Carroll's emotions. Only those who retain a vivid memory of some personal childish

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tragedy can picture the shock of such a wounding, the grief, the disillusionment. No grown-up sorrow could be keener, while it lasted, and all the timid, glorious half-dreams of having a "real little friend" fell then and there to earth.

Like an embodied joy whose race is just begun.

—SHELLEY

IV

“**I** WISH I could have someone to play with to keep,” she confided, not long after this, to a gay young uncle who was visiting for a few days at the big, gloomy house. “I almost had a very nice little girl for a friend—an *almost* very nice little girl, only she stuck out her tongue, and mother says it is vulgar to stick out your tongue; and I did love my baby sister, and she was almost big enough to play with me, only she couldn’t because her dress was too long; but they put her in the ground and covered the box all up, and she is there now; and sometimes it rains.”

“But her soul isn’t there in the ground,” comforted the gay young uncle.

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Again that word! It seemed that every one must always mock her with this empty, meaningless mummary. This time Carroll's rebellion was put into forcible words.

"Do you know, uncle Asaph," she said, very slowly and distinctly, so that he surely could not misunderstand her, "I don't care a speck about her soul—not a speck! What I care about is, my baby sister is out there all alone in the cemet'ry!"

The young uncle gazed steadily at the earnest little face, and wondered what answer to make. Wisely, he made none at all, at the time. The next day he spent the morning wandering about the grounds, and at noon brought back to the house a small tree branch, with a queer brown growth attached to it. After dinner he gave Carroll a long explanation about the cocoon, and when he felt sure she understood, passed the trophy over into her hands. He did not need to extract a promise that she would

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keep watch for the transformation. He suggested no parallels, drew no moral lesson, but waited for Nature's miracle to do its own work, in its own way.

In the days that followed, Carroll kept such vigilant guard over her mysterious treasure—running every few minutes from her play to see if anything had “happened”; observing it the last thing at night, and pattering down stairs to the room in which it was kept when she first sprang out of bed in the morning, though the old servant protested against her bare-footed trips, and prophesied her taking her “death of cold”—that she was actually on the spot when the moth finally appeared. Glowing with excitement, she called Elsa, who alone happened to be in the house at the time, to view the wonder with her; and together they watched, the old woman and the little child, equally astonished and delighted.

“It's good the other worms don't know what's going to happen to them, isn't it,

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Carroll? Else they'd be so impatient for flying, it would be hard for 'em to wait," philosophized the old woman, as they watched, breathless.

"Oh, I don't think so, Elsa," replied the child; "I hope they do know beforehand, for then it must be such fun to wait! It would make worm-hood so much more nicer, if they knew they were going to have air-hood afterwards!"

Elsa shook her head, unconvinced; and then they both gave a gasp of tremulous wonder and satisfaction, as the winged creature, at last sufficiently metamorphosed to venture forth, flew gently a short distance and waveringly alighted on a veranda rail near by.

Carroll's expression changed; she turned deepened eyes to the withered face above her.

"Elsa," she said, in a low, awed voice, "do you s'pose that is its *soul*?"

And by the vision splendid
In on the way attended.—WORDSWORTH

V

FROM this time on she ceased to accompany her mother on her weekly trips to the little grave, which before had held for her a mingled fascination and terror. Upon being pressed for the reason for this change of inclination, she would only answer:

“I don’t want to put flowers on an empty box.”

How literally and materialistically she translated her butterfly lesson into what had happened to her little sister, she could never be quite sure herself when she was older. But of one thing it was evident she was utterly convinced. What she loved was not there, under the ground; and if, to her childish idea, the physical body itself had taken

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wings and flown away, what matter? Her joyous belief in life, continuous, expanding, radiant, never again left her.

With this idea, too, her old resourcefulness and gayety returned. She found pleasure in every circumstance and detail of life. She walked about the large grounds in pleasant weather, and around the house on rainy days, talking softly to herself, seeming never lonely nor at a loss for occupation. One stormy Sunday her father, seeking her in every probable and improbable spot, found her at last in a remote room, sitting astride a rocking chair, facing its back, rocking furiously and talking away to herself, cheerfully unconscious of an encroaching presence.

"What in the world are you doing, Carroll?" he asked, in some disapprobation.

"Oh, having fun," was her instant and hearty rejoinder.

In fact, "having fun" seemed the key-

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note of her life. The little tasks which were given her now, gradually, to perform, were transformed through the alchemy of her happy spirit into games, and her play-times never lost their zest.

Ich kann nicht anders.—LUTHER

VI

A SEVERE test of Carroll's new-found philosophy came two years after the loss of her little sister. Her mother, always an invalid, died while on a trip to the south in search of health. As to what the child's thoughts were, and how she bore this new bereavement, she gave no sign. This was partly due, doubtless, to the fact that her aunt, her father's maiden sister, who was her guardian and only companion at this time, was a devoted adherent of conventional Calvinism; and, far from encouraging confidences from her small niece, would not have conceded any right, on the part of one so young, of having individual ideas or even feelings on such an occasion except the

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scrupulously orthodox ones of filial grief and pious resignation.

It was to this disciple of ritualism that the future well-being of the little girl was consigned, on the return of her father from the south; for Miss Sophia Page, being free from other ties, then took up her post permanently as house-keeper and home-maker in her brother's family. At the same time, an oddly advantageous offer of purchase being made for the ramshackle old house and its dejected acres, a removal to the city was decided upon, and Carroll's life was set to new music.

Her mother had been one of those women who live for their husbands only, and to whom their children are a very secondary consideration; so that, in spite of the contrast between her gentle personality and the more silent and austere one of her sister-in-law, there could not have been for little Carroll the heart-breaking sense of mother-loss

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that comes to some children at such a time. And though she had been happy in the great, empty place in the country, she soon became happier still in the small, plain quarters in the city street; for here, for the first time, she found herself in the midst of a life teeming with human interest, and delightedly acquiring new playmates and friends.

There were trials, of course; what child's life does not abound in them? One of these, upon her entering the public school, lay in the rather erratic name her parents had given her, with never a thought, parent-wise, of the childish embarrassments which are the school-world penalty for anything that smacks of the unusual.

"Carroll—" repeated the teacher; "how do you spell it—'C-a-r-o-l'?"

The child spelt the name correctly.

"You must be mistaken," was the teacher's verdict. "'Carroll' is a boy's name.

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Your name is probably Caroline, and they call you 'Carol,' for short."

"No, ma'am, it isn't," persisted the little girl, stoutly, but blushing painfully at being thus made conspicuous before the whole class. "I know my name is 'Carroll.'"

"You may take a demerit for contradicting your teacher, and you may go home at once and get your mother to write your name on a card for me."

"I can't," said Carroll, scarcely above a whisper.

"You can't! Well, I'd like to know why not, when I tell you to!"

"Because she can't—not now."

"She *can't*! You don't mean to tell me your mother can't write, do you?" Scathing tones indicated the teacher's profound disgust for any luckless child that would have to answer such a question in the affirmative.

Carroll looked interested and perplexed;

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for a moment she forgot the forty pairs of eyes that had been making her inquisition so painful.

"I don't know whether they can write or not," she said, thoughtfully. "Butterflies can't; but then the worm couldn't, either."

"I wonder if you are a half-wit! You may take your seat, and stay after school!" cried the exasperated teacher.

Hot with embarrassment again, Carroll obeyed her. The facts as to her name, and the misunderstanding about her mother were cleared up satisfactorily; but it was an unfortunate and trying entrance upon school life. For weeks the little girl had to endure the appellations "half-wit," and "*Mister* Carroll"—trials the depth of which a grown-up can scarcely imagine—and only her own sunny nature and merry disposition kept them from becoming permanently fixed.

School life, in fact, throughout its whole

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course, was anything but a primrose path to Carroll, and most of her troubles came from her ignorance of the gentle art of dissembling. The principal of the school was fond of coming into the class-room, and propounding some problem for the children to work out "in their heads," then, in the absence of any response from them—for his questions were invariably beyond their depth—he would give the solution and the correct answer himself, with the stereotyped query, as he turned to go: "Is there anyone who does not understand?" Forty frightened little pieces of humanity would maintain a relieved and intelligent-looking silence, only too glad to be let off from questioning; but, regularly, up would go Carroll Page's hand, though her face, flushed with shame and self-condemnation, showed anything but bravado.

This came to be such an invariable occurrence that the principal inquired privately

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into Carroll's class record, and was almost incredulous when he found that she ranked among the highest.

"She must be extremely *slow*—abnormally so, then," he concluded. "She is the only one who never understands my explanations."

The teacher finally went to the length of suggesting to the delinquent the propriety of preserving a politic silence at these times.

"Your raising your hand annoys Mr. Smythe," she explained. But the little girl's answer showed her the futility of presenting the argument of expediency to a nature so downright and uncompromising.

"Why, I'll try to understand, Miss Winter; I'll try hard; but if I can't, I just s'pose I can't; and then of course I'll have to say so, when he asks, even if it kills me—and Mr. Smythe, too—won't I?"

By their marks.—ST. JAMES

VII

ON Carroll's vigorous conviction of the unalterableness of truth was doubtless reflected something of her aunt's Puritan training. But she showed, over and over again, even in those early days, that, whatever the principles that governed her, she adopted them only when they met the approval of her own reason.

A conversation illustrative of this occurred one day when Carroll was sitting in her little rocking chair by her aunt's side, sewing on her daily half-hour "stint," down the middle of a sheet; an "over-and-over" piece of work, showing stitches of varying sizes, and marked here and there by little rusty-looking blood-stains that blazed the painful trail to housewifely perfection.

"Aunt Sophy," said Carroll, suddenly,

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without preface or warning, as she rocked back and forth in her matter-of-fact little way, "did you know I'm an unbeliever?"

Aunt Sophy jumped.

"What did you say?" she asked, nervously. Her niece often made speeches calling for a mental alertness in which the aunt felt herself lacking.

"Did you know I'm an atheist?" repeated Carroll, calmly, biting off her thread and making a knot and speaking in the casual manner of one who might have asked, "Did you know the Sanborns had soup for dinner?"

"What do you mean, child?" asked her aunt. "Why do you think you're an—atheist?" She hesitated over the word; it was too nearly a "scriptural" word to be spoken lightly.

"Because I don't believe in Hell and the Devil," replied the little girl, cheerfully, as if that ended the matter.

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Miss Page was aghast; more, it must be admitted, by the avowal of disbelief in the orthodox place of torment and its permanent resident, than by the astounding conclusion the child drew from this disbelief, and its implied commentary on what she had been taught.

"Hadn't you better talk' with' the minister about it?" she asked, helplessly, after a moment's pause.

"No," was the sober response, while Carroll still rocked and sewed; "he seems so happy the way he is that I think it would be a pity to 'sturb him."

Aunt Sophy fell silent, from pure inability to cope with the situation. But she talked with her brother about the matter, later in the day, and begged him to reason with the child, and try to get her out of so dreadful a state of sin. Fortunately, Carroll's father approached the question from a different angle.

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"Carroll," he said to his little daughter, gravely, after supper that evening, "a man who does not believe in Hell and the Devil is not called an atheist."

"Isn't he? What is he called?" asked Carroll, simply.

Her father, puzzled, hesitated; any answer he might make seemed open to the child's objections. He compromised:

"An atheist is a man who does not believe in God."

Carroll's eyes grew wide with dissent.

"Why, father, I've heard you call Mr. Warden an atheist, and I know he believes in God!"

"What makes you think that?"

Mr. Warden was one whom Carroll's father would have called a "moral man."

"Why, because he is so nice," said the little girl, confidently. "When those rowdy boys over on the Avenue were just 'busing that little yellow lost dog that you called a

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cur—you remember that little dog, don't you, father? You wouldn't let me keep him?—Mr. Warden drove them off, just as stern, and was so gentle to the little cur; and he had the Cruelty Society come and get that poor old lame cat with one eye that was so mis'able; and he always unchecks his horse when he goes in a store; I've seen him; and—”

“But what has all that to do with his believing in God?” interrupted her father, a trifle impatiently, seeing no end in prospect to the narrative so earnestly recited.

“Why—why—why—” began Carroll, puzzled in turn. “Of course he believes in God if he—why, don't you see it, father?”

She looked up into his face anxiously, sure her idea was right, yet finding it hard to reduce to argument. He gave her no help; probably he was incapable of it, for his mind had seldom wandered out of the safe fold of creed and dogma; and the matter was dropped.

Oh the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
—BROWNING

VIII

IT was in this same year, when Carroll was nine, that she made her wonderful, and to her, original, discovery about love.

She came to her aunt one day with her eyes deep and glowing.

“Why, Aunt Sophy,” she exclaimed, “if everybody loved each other there wouldn’t have to be any prisons, would there?”

“Oh, yes,” argued her aunt, whose mental processes were slow, “it would be necessary to punish the offenders even if we loved them—as I punish you when you do wrong, for your own good.”

“But if they *loved* each other those persons wouldn’t have done wrong!” urged the little girl. “You see, they would have loved the other people, and wouldn’t have stolen

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anything or killed anybody. And there wouldn't have to be any policemen," she went on, following up the subject, "because nobody would do anything to be arrested for; and there wouldn't have to be any laws, because every one would be nice to every one else, without laws; and there wouldn't be any hungry people, because the rich people would love them so much they'd have them at their houses; and they wouldn't be cold in winter—why, they wouldn't be poor at all, because everybody would go halves. What a little, *little* thing would make all the difference, wouldn't it, Aunt Sophy—just to love everybody! Wouldn't it be fun?"

It was a new thought to Miss Page. It is an old thought to most of us. Since then many books have been written on the subject, and an eminent Scotchman has called it the "greatest thing in the world." But to Carroll, at nine years, the beautiful ideal came as one out of a clear sky.

IX

ONE of Carroll's "naughty ways" that her Aunt Sophia could never quite forgive, even when she had been reluctantly won over to regard leniently much that to her was inexplicable if not irreligious, was her manner of conducting herself during the formal "pastoral calls" that were made, three or four times a year, by the punctilious, old-school minister.

These calls were all very much alike, having an order of procedure as unvarying as that of the public worship in church on the first day of the week. The minister would be escorted into the seldom-used and chilly "front parlor," chilly at all seasons of the year, by reason of its air of speechless indignation at the liberty being taken in using it

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at all. He would be carefully seated in the one rocking chair which the room boasted; and then, with his hostess opposite him and the rest of the family—if family there were—in respectful and attentive attitudes near by, there would be introduced topics of semi-religious conversation, such as the numbers “out” at church, on recent Sunday evenings, the amount of collections “taken up,” the dates and importance of various missionary or other religious meetings to be held in the near future, the success or inadequacy of the efforts of the “Ladies’ Society,” and kindred subjects of impersonal nature and languid interest. At a certain proper point in the interview the minister, clearing his throat, would say, after an appropriate and suggestive pause, “Let us pray!” and all present would kneel by their chairs. After a prayer similar in character to the one which Carroll called “the fifteener,” on Sunday (having repeatedly and accurately timed it by peep-

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ing through her fingers at the big clock at the back of the church), they would rise, a little general sigh and a pushing back of chairs would indicate that this duty was fulfilled and that the ordinary routine of life would now proceed, the minister would shake hands with every one, and take his departure.

Carroll had, almost from infancy, shown a preference for conversation with men, possibly because she found greater freedom with them for expressing her ideas; they were not quite as sure to turn aside her questions as foolish and her opinions as "unladylike," as were the women who belonged to her circle of acquaintance. So, whenever the minister called, she took great pains to be present, and always managed to "get into the conversation," as she expressed it, by asking questions, and often by introducing the discussion of such trivial matters as made her aunt turn cold with horror. But, in-

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instinctively perceiving the approach of the moment for the prayer, Carroll invariably had some reason for leaving the room just in time to escape the premonitory pause and the invocation; though, just as invariably she was found at the gate, on the pastor's departure, smilingly ready with a cordial little hand in farewell.

After one of these occasions Miss Page ventured to overstep the embarrassed reticence in such matters that was a part of her nature, and asked Carroll tactfully if she had noticed that it always happened that she left the room before the minister's prayer.

"Oh, it doesn't *happen*," replied Carroll, without hesitation. "I go on purpose."

"Why do you do such a thing as that, child?"

"Oh, I don't know; I hate it—and I bet God hates it, too!"

"Why, Carroll Page, what a dreadful thing to say! The idea of God's hating the

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minister's prayers! What makes you say that?"

Carroll looked puzzled, as she often did when asked to give her entirely unformulated reasons. It seemed to her that grown people had a peculiar propensity for demanding explanations of some of the simplest and most obvious things. Her answer this time came slowly and with hesitation.

"Oh, I can't say, really, Aunt Sophy; but I should think that God was too busy to pay real good 'tention to all those call-prayers, every day. They're so much alike, that I shouldn't think they'd be very interesting to Him, yet I s'pose He is too polite not to listen—so I'll bet He hates it."

Her vague feeling about this whole matter was something which, young though she was, she felt it impossible to put into words; and even in later life, when she was so frank and ready to speak about almost all deep things of experience, she maintained a pe-

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culiar silence on the subject of prayer. It was only by some word or expression dropped by chance now and then that I came to understand her feeling that prayer, communion between one's most real and inmost self and the great universal Source and Father, could seldom be voiced at all in the presence of others, and never as a set and formal functioning.

"The countless gold of a merry heart."

X

IN those first days of our acquaintance in Detroit, her undaunted spirit of cheerfulness was a constantly recurring surprise to me. There was never such a girl as she for "having fun," and she entered into all our play with such heart and soul that, as I have said, nothing seemed to go on well without her. Yet her love of "good times" never seemed to make her even childishly intolerant of the little duties that were increasingly laid upon her as time went on.

I remember going one afternoon, in great excitement, to get her to come and try some new roller-skates that Eunice Sanborn had just acquired, and that each one of us on "our block" was trying, in turn, with timorous delight. I found Carroll busy in the

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wood-shed, piling up, stick by stick, against a long wall, two cords of stove wood to be used for the kitchen fire during the winter. My friend heard the news of the wonderful skates with the most satisfying enthusiasm, and then went on methodically with her work.

"Isn't that splendid!" she said. "Won't it be too much fun for anything to use them! I guess I'll be ready by to-morrow, and then won't you die of laughing to see me fall all over the sidewalk and gutter, after you've all learned how!" And she laughed gaily herself, and returned to her piling.

"Oh, can't you come a little while to-day?" I cried, in disappointment.

"Nope," was the uncompromising but cheerful answer. "I've got to finish this first."

"Don't you suppose your aunt would let you off a little while, just this once?" I pleaded. "You could do the rest of it to-morrow. Why don't you ask her?"

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"Oh, it isn't Aunt Sophy; she wouldn't care when I do it. But it's got to be done sometime, and—it's so much more fun to think of play when you're working, than to think of work when you're playing!"

"Well, I think it's mean and hateful," was my view of the situation. "Aren't you mad that you've got to do the old work at all, Carroll?"

"Why, no," she replied, standing up and regarding me with her "thoughtful" look. "I won't mind it a particle, really, Theodora, now that you have told me about the skates."

"But doesn't your back ache, stooping down, and standing up all the time?" I asked, transferring my attention to the details of the work.

It was a kind of labor to which I was not accustomed. In my family there were men and boys to do such "chores."

Carroll straightened herself and stretched her arms.

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"A little," she admitted, "if you weren't too busy doing it to think about it!"

"I hate work, anyhow!" I exclaimed, starting to go, and possibly relieving my twinges of conscience for not stopping to help my friend with this statement of individual eccentricity.

"I don't," said Carroll; "at least, not much; at least, I may hate the working part of work, but when there's fun to think about, you don't have any time to spare for hating. Of course," she added, anxious to agree with me as far as she could, "it would be horrid if it weren't for that!"

Time . . . in which the world
And all her train were hurl'd.

—HENRY VAUGHAN

XI

A CERTAIN day, in that same first year of our acquaintance, was one of those dates periodically designated by various religious sects as the time appointed for the “end of the world.”

We children heard our parents talking about it, most of them with outward skepticism, but, to the finely attuned ear of childhood, with a concealed note of awe and unacknowledged half-dread. We all made light of the matter when we discussed it on our corner, early in the afternoon; but, as sunset approached, the sky took on a strange, lurid appearance, ominous murky clouds were rolled up from the east; and

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the sun, a great crimson globe of fire, behind a screen of vapor, seemed to hold within itself a fearful menace of impending doom and desolation.

People came running out of their houses to look, and our corner became the gathering place for the families who lived near by on the adjoining block. I remember still the vague alarm in most of the faces; and even the fathers, those usual strongholds of confidence and comfort, gazed not without uneasiness at the portent. I felt a gentle nudge at my elbow, and found Carroll Page, tip-toeing up to look, at my side.

"Isn't it awful?" said I.

"Isn't it fun?" said Carroll.

"Aren't you scared?" I whispered. "What if it is going to be the end of the world!"

"Oh, I hope it is!" she exclaimed, jubilantly. "Wouldn't it be just too splendid, if God had put off the end of the world all

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this time, and then had it exactly when you and I happened to be here?"

I gaped at her, speechless.

"It would be so much nicer than dying the usual way," explained Carroll—"to be snatched up into those clouds. Just think, maybe in ten minutes we will be! I can hardly realize it, can you?"

"I thought you loved to live, and had such good times," I objected, reproachfully.

"Why, I do. That's why I'd like this. 'Most everything is interesting, but this would be so dreadfully interesting!"

I drew away from her and went and stood by my father. At that weird hour it seemed more natural and normal to be awe-struck and afraid, than cheerful and exulting. The end of the world did not come, and I believe only one person in the city of Detroit went disappointed to bed that night.

Who shuts his hand hath lost his gold.

—GEORGE HERBERT

XII

CARROLL'S attitude towards religious matters was so entirely different from her aunt's that she escaped much of the argument and admonition that that conscientious and good woman would have felt she must bestow if she had not been at every attempt baffled and mystified by a point of view at once so startling and yet so serious that she found her stock of phrases inapplicable to the real situation. On the occasion when, after long inner debate and prayer, the aunt approached the niece on the subject which she felt her now at a fitting age to take up, properly consider, and duly act upon, namely, "conversion and joining the church," she was rendered speechless at the outset of

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their conversation, not by a "hardened state of sin," which she would have had plenty of arguments to cope with, but by an attitude of mind wholly novel and unprepared for.

"Carroll," she had said, very seriously, "have you ever talked to the minister about the state of your soul?"

"No, Aunt Sophy."

"Don't you think it's about time for you to be interested in it?"

"Why, I don't know as I do, dear. Don't you think it is terribly selfish to be so interested in one's own soul?"

Selfish! Miss Page, trying to think of an appropriately severe rejoinder, became involved in her own thoughts, and the golden moment slipped by.

The heart hath reasons that reason doth not know.

—PASCAL

XIII

MY own first talk with Carroll on the subject of death, or rather, of life—for the idea of death was one that her mind seemed to glance off from, take no cognizance of—was when Curly, the small brown water-spaniel that was the joy of “our block,” was killed by a passing street-car. Carroll and I saw the cruel accident, and she it was who ran and picked the limp little creature up in her arms. Sitting on the curb at the side of the street, she held him while he gasped his poor little life away, raising tragic and loving eyes to hers the while, and showing his gratitude, even in those last moments, by trying to lick her tender, pitying hand. But when the final breath was drawn, and I was

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wringing my hands in sorrow and distress, Carroll laid him gently down, and rising, looked about.

"Now we must tell a policeman, and he'll know what to do," she said, quietly.

"Oh, Carroll, sha'n't *we* bury him?" I urged, as usual ready to defer to her, but not without protest.

"*That* isn't *him*," she answered with ungrammatical force, turning half about to give a glance at the little heap; "not any more than this curbstone is. Why should we want to carry it home with us, and feel sorry and sad about it, and cry as we buried it in the ground, any more than we'd do it to the curbstone?"

"But even you think it is the house he lived in, don't you? I'd like your house, Carroll, and would love to stay near it as long as I could, even after you'd moved out, just because you'd lived there. It would make me think of you."

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Carroll dug her heel into the turf and swung back and forth on it before answering. It always took her some time to think.

"But if I had moved out because the house was on fire, and when I was gone you found everything all burnt and blackened and charred and the rafters ready to fall, I guess it wouldn't make you think of me, would it? I'd consider you pretty foolish if you preferred to stay at that falling house instead of looking down the street after me, and perhaps seeing me wave my hand to you as I turned the next corner."

"But—to me that isn't just his house; it's Curly," I persisted.

"Why? Don't you see that already it doesn't look like him? Even the hair looks different, somehow, and those aren't his dear eyes! I don't know what to call *that*, but Curly himself, with his glossy, curly hair, and his wagging stump of a tail, and his bright brown eyes all full of fun,—he's up

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here, somewhere. I wish I could see him!" And she raised her head, and looked up, blinking, to a place just above the level of our heads, readjusting the focus of her eyes, as if trying by sheer force of will to penetrate a baffling veil that hid something real and actual from her sight.

I followed her example, as usual, and looked too, but saw nothing but the motes in the sunbeams, and empty air.

"What makes you think so, Carroll? Why do you say Curly isn't there?" I pointed behind me, but did not look down. I did not believe Carroll, of course, but there was something very assuring in her confidence.

"I don't know," was the rather disappointing answer.

"Is it because the Bible says so?" I urged, really eager to be convinced.

"Oh, no; how could the people in the Bible know any more about it than we do?"

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"Carroll! The people in the Bible!" I reproved. "Of course they knew things that we don't."

"Well, do *you* believe it, then, because the Bible says so?" She turned the war into my camp.

"Why—why, yes—I believe it, of course." I was eleven, and a member of the church, and "believed" many things I had never thought about.

"But," I added, honestly, after an instant's thought, "some way I don't believe it the way you do. I believe it like—like religious things, and you believe it like everyday things. Please tell me why you do, Carroll."

I remember, after all these years, just how she looked at me, there in the city street, the little brown heap lying beside us—the earnest, puzzled, *thinking* look, as if she were trying hard to find the answer.

"I—I truly can't tell you how I know,

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Theodora," she said at last. "I just *know*. I know it all through me!"

And with that answer I had to be content.

Comes a little cloudlet 'twixt ourselves and heaven.

—BULWER LYTTON

XIV

I AM constantly tempted to digress and mention other incidents of that far-away childhood not directly relevant to this development of Carroll's character and beliefs. Indeed, her belief about life was so woven into her entire nature, was such an everyday and genuine part of her, that it sometimes seems as if almost every recollection of her is irradiated with that spirit of vividness and enjoyment. But that her enjoyment demanded a free right of way, brooking no obstacles in the form of a troubled conscience or a sense of wrongdoing, we learned when we gave her her "surprise party."

We had arranged it with great secrecy and excitement, had gained Miss Page's

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consent, sending a scared little delegation to her beforehand, and at four o'clock, one spring afternoon, knocked loudly upon the forbidding door with the old-fashioned, big brass knocker, shaped like a dragon's head, which held guard over the sacred "hall and front parlor" part of the house. Carroll duly appeared in answer to our somewhat abashed knocking, and all in unison we cried, "Surprise! Surprise!" waving our little boxes and packages containing the various elements of the supper we had assigned to each to bring.

But Carroll's reception, which, being Carroll's, we had expected to be much more glowing and appreciative than the usual one of the "surprised" child, was a disappointment. Instead of ecstatically inviting us into the house, she came out on the little front "stoop," partly closing the door behind her.

"Oh, I'm so glad you have come to play,"

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she said, politely, "but let's play out in the yard; wouldn't you rather?"

That, however, was not at all our programme. Our boxes must be handed to Miss Page, our "things" must be duly placed on the spare-room bed, and we had come, not for the every-day, out-of-door sports, but for "Clap-in-clap-out," "Pillow and key," "Black magic," "Post-Office," and like elevating and instructive in-door games. So we pushed past her into the house, and Carroll reluctantly followed.

"She isn't glad to see us!" someone said, disappointedly, almost resentfully; and that voiced the feeling of all of us.

We invaded the sitting-room, and methodically began our strenuous games. Carroll took part, but without her usual whole-souled enjoyment. There was a shadow on her face, almost a worried look. She seemed, very unlike Carroll, to be *trying* to have a good time!

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During one of the games of greatest hilarity, I saw her slip out of the room, and quietly followed her, in the hope of finding out the cause—for I felt sure there must be one—of her strange behavior. I reached the kitchen door just in time to hear her saying:

“I don’t know what to do, Aunt Sophy! They *would* come in, though I invited them not to, and I can’t bear to tell them to go away. I thought they knew you never allowed me to have company without your permission.”

“Oh, it’s all right,” Miss Page answered. “I realized that it would be a lot of trouble, but they said you were the only one that had never had a party, and this seemed as easy a way of giving one as any.”

“Oh!” came Carroll’s voice, quite changed, and with its usual ring. “Then you knew they were coming, Aunt Sophy! You said they might?”

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"Why, of course, child! What do you suppose I had you put on your best dress for, if not for this?"

"Oh, Aunt Sophy! How perfectly lovely! How darling of you to let me have a party!" And Carroll, wheeling round, her face aglow, encountered me at the door, eavesdropping, and waltzed me breathlessly around the room to work off her pent-up anxiety and the joyous reaction from it.

After that there was nothing to complain of in Carroll's conduct. Everything went with a swing and a dash, and we had what we had expected to have at Carroll's house, "just the best old time," as one of the girls said, on the way home.

Those obstinate questionings
Of sense, and outward things ———
—WORDSWORTH

XV

ONE day in summer, Carroll and I had walked beyond the city limits to “the woods,” which was a favorite place with us. We were lying on the ground, looking up through the green branches to the sky, which always looks its most wonderful blue when seen in just that way, when my friend said, after a long silence, and apparently *à propos* of nothing, that she hoped when she grew up she should get married and have some children, —“quite a lot of them.”

“Why?” I asked.

My own aspirations were more exclusive.

“Because,” she said dreamily, “I know how they’d feel, and I’d feel with them.”

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“What do you mean, Carroll Page?” To me there seemed to be no use in talking so vaguely.

“Well, this blue sky reminds me of one time when I was a little girl”—she was now twelve or thirteen!—“and had a balloon, one of those red balloons, you know, attached to a string, that one gets at a circus. I never went to a circus, but my best uncle brought me this balloon and I just loved it. I used to take it out in the big yard we had then, and run up and down, holding to the end of the string, and playing it was the sail and I was the boat, or playing it was the rainbow and I was running after the pot of gold, or that it was a guiding fairy—lovely games I played with it,” said Carroll, smiling reminiscently and forgetting the present.

“And what happened?” I prompted.

“Well, one day the string broke and the balloon went up, up, up, in the air. I

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watched it, tipping my head 'way back, and it went up higher and higher, and got smaller and smaller, and then I couldn't see it at all. I was dreadfully sorry to lose it and felt almost like crying, for I guess I didn't have so very many bought things to play with; and then I thought of something so nice that I forgot to feel bad." Once more she seemed to forget her listener, and I became impatient.

"What has all that to do with your hoping you'll have a lot of children, Carroll? I'm sure I don't see!"

"Why, it all belongs together," she assured me. "It was a day like this, and I remember just how blue the sky was where the little speck disappeared. So I went into the house to tell my mother my nice thought, and I said, 'Mother, my balloon broke and went up into the sky, and do you s'pose God has got it by this time, and is glad to have it up there for baby sister and

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the other little children angels to play with?" I was all excited about it, you know, for you see it was a very comforting thought, I had loved the balloon so. And my mother said, 'Why, Carroll Page, what a naughty, irreverent thing to say! You mustn't ever say such a thing again in your life!' She didn't tell me why, and I didn't understand, and everything suddenly felt all kind of dark and heavy—like indigestion, you know. I'd lost my balloon, and it was wrong to think God had liked it,—and somehow there wasn't anything to be glad about."

"You do 'most always manage to be glad about something, don't you?" I interpolated, with unwonted perception.

"Well," Carroll laughed, "I was very little then, and of course I believed my mother must be right. But I think now, that if *I* was someone's mother and she came to me and said what I said to my mother that time,

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I'd know that she didn't feel naughty and irreverent, but just the most reverent; and I'd say, 'Yes, indeed, God loves the balloon, and will be so pleased to have it, and will keep it for you, after the angel children have played with it a little, so that you can have it again sometime.' "

"The idea! That's a fairy tale, Carroll. 'Keep it for you!' You'll grow up before you die and go to heaven, and what will you want of a balloon then?" asked I, Theodora of the literal mind.

"I don't know," she answered. "But I think there's something in fairy tales that's true, and I think there is something in that that's true. The little red balloon made me awfully happy, and perhaps I'd mean that God would take care of the happiness in it for me, and keep it till I came. But whatever is the true part of it, I somehow know I'd say that to my little girl, and she would go out and play again, and have a better

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time than before even; and besides, she'd never be afraid to tell me her thoughts. Sometimes, after that, I wouldn't tell my mother some of the things I was thinking, for fear she would tell me they were naughty. To me they didn't seem so, but you never could tell. I always remembered the balloon."

"That's an awfully little thing to remember, all these years," I said. "I presume a hundred such things have happened to me and I have forgotten them."

"It *is* funny, what things we remember and what ones we forget, isn't it?" she mused. "All the time I was a little girl in that big old house looks to me now like this empty air up here above us, with just a few little pictures, like this balloon-happening, shining out of it like pin-points, here and there. It seems to me the times I remember are the times that made me surprised or glad, or that hurt me inside; and that I re-

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member more the way I felt than the things that happened. Isn't that funny?"

And so we speculated, lying on our backs, under the trees, shading our eyes with our hands and gazing up through the dark green branches into the blue, blue sky beyond.

The ceremonious air of gloom.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD

XVI

CARROLL'S way of looking at death, even when it invaded her own circle of friends, was so different from the conventional way that I believe we never became quite accustomed to it. One of the first times when this peculiarity of her niece's attitude was brought to Miss Page's notice came when Carroll was about sixteen.

The aunt came home just at dusk, after a round of church calls, solemn and important and full of news.

"What do you think, Carroll?" she announced. "Poor Deacon Everett is dead!"

"Is he, auntie?" Carroll was sitting on the floor in front of the fire-place, playing

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with the black-and-white kitten. She looked up.

"Well, I'm glad I had such a lovely talk with him the other day about plans for the League this winter. There's not another person could give me so much help and good advice."

"I think it's rather unfeeling, my dear, to be thinking of yourself instead of the poor man!"

"Why do you say 'poor man,' Aunt Sophy? Do you think he has gone to Hell?"

"Carroll! What a dreadful thing to say! Even if he had, what a brutal way to put it! And how could you even ask such a question about him? A good man like Deacon Everett going to—to that place!"

"He *has* always been good, hasn't he?" approved Carroll. "Then you surely believe that he has gone to Heaven, don't you?"

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"Gone to Heaven? Why, of course I do, child! But death is solemn and dreadful, no matter how you look at it."

"Why?" persisted Carroll. "Is it religious to think it dreadful? If it is, what's the use of religion? Or don't you truly believe what religion teaches?"

"Oh, of course I believe he's happy in Heaven now," grudgingly admitted Miss Page, "but it seems irreverent for you to talk about it the way you do. And besides, aren't you sorry a single bit for his wife and daughter? That's what comes of never having been converted and joining the church!"

"But I am very sorry for Mrs. Everett and Anna. Of course they will miss him, dreadfully. I missed you, when you were away at Grandma's, that six months, and you left me here with Elsa. All I wanted to know, just now, was why you said '*poor Mr. Everett,*' if you believe he's having a

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better time than we are, at this very minute.”

“And to think,” went on Aunt Sophia, dismissing her niece’s comparison as irrelevant, “to think he was out at prayer-meeting only night before last; and just as smiling and cheerful as usual; even made jokes afterwards, as someone recalls, about our Fair! He little dreamed, then, that the end was so near, poor man! Well, it should be a lesson to all of us!”

“What lesson, Aunt Sophy?” Carroll stroked the kitten and looked at the fire.

“That ‘in the midst of life we are in death,’ ” quoted Miss Page. “‘We know not what hour the Bridegroom cometh.’ We should be prepared, any moment, for the summons to meet our Maker.”

“Oh, auntie!” cried Carroll, in genuine distress, at last, “what a terribly gruesome sort of thing you make it! To be constantly ‘prepared to meet one’s Maker,’ seems, the way you say it, to be the most depressing

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thing to be prepared for in the world! It looks so different to me—but I suppose that is because I always did like surprises, and that is going to be such a big surprise; for after all we don't really know anything about it. Sometimes I feel as if I can hardly wait!"

"Oh, Carroll, Carroll!" sighed her aunt. "I wish your poor mother had lived and brought you up! I've done the best I could, but when you go on like this, I'm frightened. It all sounds like blasphemy to me, talking about what comes after death as a surprise—a pleasant one, too—and being in a hurry to gratify your curiosity, instead of grounding your faith in the Bible, which tells you all about it, and which ought to be your sure and sufficient guide unto eternal life! And yet no one can say I haven't faithfully tried to give you sound religious instruction and training!"

"No, no one can say that, and no one

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would better, in my presence!" said Carroll, jumping up from the hearth rug and giving her aunt's unwilling cheek a laughing kiss. "If *keeping on living* seems a natural and un-dreadful sort of thing to me, and I'm a discouraging 'limb,' in consequence, it surely isn't your fault. So let's not feel bad about it, but let's have a nice, cosy time, because it's such fun to be together in front of a jolly fire on a cold, snowy, blowy, winter evening like this! Shall I make some tea?"

As a man traveling into a far country.

—ST. MATTHEW

XVII

BUT the sense of humor was too strong in Carroll to allow her to overlook tempting opportunities for mischief.

One day, a few weeks later, Miss Page on entering the library found her niece huddled in the most dejected attitude, her face buried in her arms, and deep sobs shaking her from head to foot.

“What is the matter?” she asked in alarm.

“Oh, auntie,” came a stifled voice, “poor Mary Royce is going to Berlin to study music and will be gone three years, at least!”

“Why, I know that, child; but why on earth do you say ‘poor’ Mary? It’s the

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thing she's been hoping for and counting on for years—all her life, you might say."

"But I saw her only yesterday, before her mother told her about the legacy; and she so little suspected anything unusual—looked so bright and happy!"

"What *are* you driving at, Carroll? What is there sad about her looking happy before she heard the good news? I should think you'd be glad she could look happy then, for she's happier still to-day."

"But her poor family—"

"Good gracious, Carroll! Sometimes I almost think you're mentally defective! Don't you know the plan is for her family to go over and visit her in a year or two? Of course they will miss her, while she's gone; but I hope they are not so selfish as to let that interfere with their rejoicing over her good fortune! And, anyway, you were crying your eyes out because of pitying 'poor Mary.'"

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“Well,” said Carroll, raising somewhat ashamed but dancing eyes, “*You* said, ‘poor Deacon Everett’!”

Her aunt looked mystified, perplexed, for a moment. Then, with sudden comprehension, she emitted a sound of utter disgust, and swept disapprovingly from the room.

Another golden chamber
Larger than this we leave, and lovelier.

—P. A. BAILEY

XVIII

FOR a long time, it seemed to me inconsistent in Carroll that one who had so keen an appreciation of life should feel so cheerful and light-hearted at the thought of "leaving it all," as I should have called it; in other words, on the subject of death.

"I should think you'd hate it," I said to her finally, one day, when I mustered up courage to open the subject.

"Why, I guess that is just the reason I don't hate it," she replied, after her usual pause to think the matter out. "I love life because it is so interesting; you never know what is going to happen next, so you never get bored. It's like reading a book; if one page is dry, you know that when you turn the leaf the next page may be sparkling.

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And so, some days might seem dull and stupid if one didn't always know that the next ones may hold pleasant surprises in store."

"Yes, that is life; I understand that," I said. "But how about death?"

"Well, Theodora," Carroll said, quite slowly, "to my mind it is all, life here, and life later, in short, Life,—just like an adventure; new and wonderful things happening to us all the time as we wander on, eager-eyed, pleased with the pleasant things, and not bothered, over-much, by the loud but harmless roar of the lions. And when the time comes for us to be advanced into a different state of being, as the butterfly is when it leaves the cocoon, why, it seems to me that is the most interesting happening of all. Yes, that's the best way I can describe how it looks to me, when I stop to think it out,—that which people call death—like a wonderful, great adventure."

XIX

WHEN Carroll's father died, and she did not put on mourning, there was a good deal of comment in the circle of her friends. But it was not until several weeks had passed by, and some of us were spending an afternoon at little Ellen White's house, making Christmas presents, that one of the girls ventured to broach the subject, tentatively, to Carroll herself.

"Why should I wear black?" she parried. "I don't advertise by my style of dress any other sort of event in my private life. Why should I this one?"

"Well, it seems to me rather the right thing to do, as a mark of respect," suggested Kate Pearson.

"Respect?" repeated Carroll. "If the

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creatures that become butterflies—the grubs—if the immediate family of one of those who had found his wings and flew away could change their color to black or gold or sky-blue, I don't see how it would be showing respect to the happy one that had gone a-flying so much as it would be a self-important attracting of attention to themselves.”

“That parallel is foolish, Carroll,” another of the girls put in. “What one means by ‘respect’ is really love. People are inclined to think one doesn't care, is heartless, if one makes no outward sign.”

“If people's only way of deciding whether or not I love my father is by looking at the color of my dress now,” said Carroll, with some heat, “then I don't believe I care much for their opinion. If I've never shown it in any real way, worth counting, I'd be a hypocrite to try to intimate it conventionally now!”

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"Don't you think, dear," said gentle Mrs. White, little Ellen's mother, who had been passing through the room and had paused a moment, her attention arrested by the conversation, "Don't you think that mourning dress is a protection? I feel that it shelters one from the pain of careless questions or distressing remarks, which might be made, through ignorance, by those who would not otherwise guess what had happened."

"How do you mean, Mrs. White? I can't quite imagine what kind of remarks and questions would be distressing."

"Well, I had a friend once, who was asked how her daughter was, two or three months after she had lost her; such questions as that, I mean."

"How dreadfully hard for her!" came our commiserating murmur.

"And," went on Mrs. White, in her sweet, half-pleading voice, "when people aren't

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warned in that generally adopted way to be on their guard, it is of course quite natural for them to refer to those who have gone in the most casual, familiar manner. I even knew a man, once, to make a joke to a woman about her husband, who had recently passed away. You can imagine how he felt, when he found out, and as for her—”

“Oh, Mrs. White!” we girls cried, in consternation at the thought.

But Carroll was imperturbable.

“The trouble is, we feel so differently about the thing itself,” she objected. “Now, I like to talk about my father, and I’d love to have someone joke to me about him. I wish he had had more jokes in his life, but I hope that now he is going to make up for all that lack.”

There was a constrained and disapproving silence for a moment, then someone asked,

“But if someone who didn’t know what

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has happened should come up to you suddenly, to-day, and ask how your father's cough is, or something like that, wouldn't it—wouldn't it nearly kill you, Carroll?"

We stopped our sewing and looked up to see how she took it. It seemed a brutal thing to have said, although she had almost invited it.

Carroll shook her head, slowly.

"Of course I don't know what I'd say," she replied. "One never can forecast the words one would use; but I am sure it wouldn't hurt me any more than it would Mrs. Royce if a friend asked her some such thing about Mary.

"Why, didn't you know Mary's gone to Germany to study?" she'd naturally reply. And then the other person would remark, 'How nice for Mary!' and would probably add, 'But it must be awfully lonely for you, Mrs. Royce!' and she would say, 'Yes, of course it is; I miss her all the time, for Mary

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is such a dear girl.'—I don't see why people shouldn't talk in that same natural, pleasant way about their friends who are to be away longer than Mary. I think there's more of death in the awful silences about them, than there is in their going itself."

"I'll tell you why I should wear mourning," I said to Carroll, on our way home. "It is just because it is the customary thing to do, and I think you are looked at and talked about more if you don't do it than if you do. So I'd wear it in self-defense."

"How many unnatural things connected with death seem to be 'customary!'" Carroll stormed, quickening her pace. "Isn't it curious that at the time of all times when people should be free and untrammelled, they are fettered by rites and ceremonies and fashions stronger than iron chains? That when one would elect quiet and opportunity for thought and memory of the one

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who has gone on, one's whole attention is required for irrelevant details in regard to decking the body of the living, or burying the body of the dead?"

"But the dead have to be buried, and the living have to be dressed."

"Not with pomp and ceremony and parade of grief, if one really believes that what is left is but the empty shell; and not with the particular color and texture prescribed by fashion-books, if one's thought is of life, not death. No, Theodora, I don't believe these things 'have to' be done, any more than Chinese women have to torture their feet, or Indian widows to be burned on the funeral pyres of their husbands."

Naught so sweet as melancholy,—BURTON

XX

ONE of the funniest Carroll-incidents I ever knew about was connected with the last illness of our friend, Mrs. Crumb.

The poor old lady had been half dead for years; literally, for half her body was completely paralyzed; and she was weak and fragile, so that when a severe cold assailed her, that year of the blizzard, there was nothing left in her to resist its onslaught. Finally, when the doctor told someone she could not live more than two or three days longer at the utmost, Mrs. Crumb somehow heard of it; and so, when her friends came tip-toeing in to see her, they had a most dismal time of commiseration and leave-taking.

Carroll had been one of Mrs. Crumb's

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faithful servitors for years, going every few days to read aloud to her, or to take her a leaf or a flower, or, better still, a nosegay of gossip; so of course, as luck would have it, she happened in at this very time when the doctor's verdict had wrought its havoc. The room was pervaded by an atmosphere of heaviness and gloom, damp handkerchiefs were in use, and speeches of consolation and resignation, in turn, were being made, when Carroll came briskly in and said "Good-morning!" in her gay, bright way, just as usual.

Everyone looked at her in scandalized disapprobation, and as soon as was decent after the greetings, Mrs. Crumb asked, with ill-concealed importance, "Hasn't anyone told you what Dr. Brown gave out about me, this morning?"

Handkerchiefs ostentatiously in use again, throughout the room. Carroll admitted her ignorance.

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"He says I can't live more than a few days longer," announced the afflicted one, with the air of one hurling an explosive bomb at the newcomer, and then standing back to watch the effect.

"Oh, Mrs. Crumb!" cried Carroll, joyfully, "How lovely for you to be almost through with this troublesome body that won't do what you want it to! Aren't you delighted?"

There was such consternation in the room that people forgot their handkerchiefs entirely and just stared at the intruder, open-mouthed. The fact that they, every one of them, in their secret souls, wondered "what on earth Mrs. Crumb should want to live for" did not mitigate their horror at this undisguised cheerfulness in meeting the situation. It seemed like an "affront to Providence," as someone said about it afterwards.

"And just think of the wonderful things

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you'll be knowing all about, in a few days," went on Carroll, happily unconscious, "while we shall still be guessing! Oh, I envy you, Mrs. Crumb!"

The funny part of the incident lay in Mrs. Crumb's being so injured, and almost insulted, at having her tragic eminence assailed, that she dropped her mournful tones and solemn, hushed manner, and became quite commonplace and peppery in her remarks. If it had not been a physical impossibility, she would have stiffened with indignation. In lieu of this, her old eyes snapped, and when she told Carroll that she had long been a subject of prayer with her, her manner almost suggested that of the prophet of old, on the occasion of his dealing with certain garrulous and irreverent children. Mrs. Sanborn, who was there, and who told me about it, has very little sense of humor, but even she had to smile, as she recalled the change from the manner

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of a pious saint raising brimming and resigned eyes to heaven as she suffered martyrdom, to that of a cross old woman childishly indignant at being envied instead of sympathized with, and having sunshine pervade her sick-room instead of thunderstorm gloom and wax tapers.

No wind can blow my bark astray.—JOHN BURROUGHS

XXI

AS we emerged from girlhood into young womanhood, the peculiarity of that side of Carroll's ideas which we vaguely termed her "religious beliefs" set her more and more in a class by herself. I do not mean that she was not one of us in every outward sense; for, just as in her childhood, she was always in the very center of all things light-hearted, and "fun" was just as dear to her as ever. But it seemed curious to me then, it seems strange to me now, that just because a human being's ideas about death were unique and decided, that individual should seem so completely different from his fellows. For that was the way it was with Carroll; the rest of us were like a herd, and she was an individual apart.

I do not think she was more perfect than

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the rest of us; her impulsive nature led her into many small pitfalls and one very large one; she was always falling, in the march of life, but she always picked herself up with a laugh, and trudged brightly on as if there were no possibility of her ever repeating the accident. Her nature was so happy at the core that gloom and depression had positively no chance with her; and the sad things of life—the things we of the rest of the world call sad—had for her no horrors, because they had no foundation.

If Carroll's ideas had not been an actual and unassumed part of her, we, with the arrogance and brutality of youth, should have had no patience with them, and open ridicule would have been her portion. But whatever she might not have been, we knew she was genuine; so we accepted her "queerness," respected it to a certain extent, and, as the years went on, it became in a way even an unacknowledged comfort to us.

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Of course, it was almost immoral for one to be so untouched by solemnity and gloom in respect to the most serious facts of existence; but still, when "dreadful" things happened, in times of sickness and mortal anxiety and death, the knowledge that to her they were not "dreadful," but natural, interesting, and sometimes even happy, often sent us to her just to be inconsistently warmed by the brightness and cheer which we did not believe in, but which we found, nevertheless, strangely comforting at such times.

But the really curious aspect of the situation lay in the fact that it was not alone in times of illness and suffering, and of those great crises where the heart almost stops beating and the whole world is suddenly changed, by one's being brought face to face with the tremendous fundamental problems of existence—it was not at such times alone that Carroll's buoyancy and assurance set

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her apart from others. That would have been merely what one would have expected. But that one's confident feeling about what we call "the end," the end that comes in the always vaguely remote future, and that seems so shut away from our outer consciousness and voluntary contemplation as to be, almost, a matter of theoretical and academic interest only, should reduce to a beautiful simplicity and irradiate with brightness every step of the way towards it—that was something we never should have believed possible, if we had not seen repeated proofs of it in Carroll's life. Out of scores of incidents which I recall even yet, I will mention just one, for it is fairly typical in showing the dissimilarity of her habitual attitude from ours in the daily happenings of life, as well as in its great tragedies.

Several of us, "our crowd," had gone off on the train, on a day's excursion. We

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were in the long tunnel under the river, on the return trip, when the train came to one of those sudden, dead stops, followed by absolute silence, which brings such a feeling of blankness and finality. An unscheduled stop, especially in a tunnel, is always to the timorous suggestive of danger. For a few minutes we kept on with our gay laughing and talking, the six of us, trying not to notice that we were not speeding along as we ought to be doing. Then something happened that made me throw aside the flimsy pretense and give an exclamation of alarm. It was merely that the rear-end brakeman passed through our car towards the front of the train, his lantern in his hand.

“Why isn’t he back on the track, with that light?” I asked. “Do you suppose we are stopping here, where we ought not to be, without any signal behind us to announce it to an oncoming train?”

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"He certainly is the one that should attend to the signaling," said Kate Pearson. "In this short local train there isn't anyone else who could possibly have gone; it means that no one is there."

"Let's leave the train men to manage their own business; they ought to know as much about it as we do," someone suggested. "Probably we are going to start right away."

But we did not start, and we heard the men working at one of our wheels, even as she spoke. Of course we could see nothing, for it was perfectly black outside, and we could not open a window to look out, as the tunnel was full of choking smoke.

"It must be a hot box," said Anna, "and no one knows how long we shall have to stay here."

We were all nervous. In fact, everyone in the car seemed to be, though all tried not to show it. With that superficial optimism

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that seems to be in order when, in times of possible danger, the demand of decorum for outward composure still dominates the inward fear, we began to offer stout-hearted suggestions.

"Those in charge of this train couldn't be so careless as not to post a signal behind," said one.

But countless times they do forget, and countless accidents happen that way, the inner thought of all of us made answer.

"There may not be a train due for hours, and they may know it, and so not need to signal," said another.

We all thought of the possibility of extra trains and unscheduled "freights."

"Well, worry won't help matters, and it isn't a bit likely that anything really will run into us," argued another voice, the quality of the tone belying the confident words.

Then up spoke Carroll.

"Well, what if it should?" she said, and

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we saw that her face was as bright and composed as usual.

"What if it should?" I cried, turning on her, and letting off some of my bottled nervousness; "why, if it should, we'd all be ground to atoms in an instant, that's all!"

Carroll shook her head, smiling a little.

"Carroll Page, aren't you the very least little bit afraid?" asked Kate.

"Why, no," Carroll replied, simply. "It couldn't hurt *us*."

That was all; but after that the tension loosened. The would-be cheerful view we had tried to take had not lightened our anxiety nor lessened our fears, for we had known beneath it all the time that there *was* danger, and that an accident might come. But with that undramatic acceptance of it, that tranquil "What if it should?" the burden of clenched-handed resistance, and something of our fear itself, seemed to fall from us.

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I think this little incident is an illustration of the way in which Carroll took life in general; and it was by watching her, and noticing these things, that I began to suspect that to be without, absolutely without, that unspoken, unacknowledged, perhaps unrealized fear of death, at many turns, to be able to bring to every exigency in life a light-hearted "Well, what if it should?" attitude—not from fatalism but from a serene sense of unassailable security—must mean to have a very different view of "things present" as well as of "things to come," from that of most of us.

It was as on the opening of a door
By one who in his hand a lamp doth hold.
—R. W. GILDER

XXII

I REMEMBER well—which one of the group that was there does not?—the time when Carroll conceived and announced her surprising plan.

It was a Saturday morning in mid-winter. Several of us in the little room downtown rented by the “flower mission,” were arranging from the masses of cut flowers which had been sent in by florists and friends, for the purpose, the individual baskets and bouquets that were presently to be taken to the various hospitals and tenement-houses on our list for that morning. The talk embraced things pleasant and unpleasant, and gossipy in general, as such talks will, and in time it touched upon the recent funeral of our minister’s wife. There was

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a difference of recollection about some detail—what hymn was sung at the close, or some such matter—and Carroll, who had been silent, was appealed to, to settle the dispute.

“I wasn’t there,” she said.

“Carroll never goes to funerals,” I appended, half complainingly.

“Well,” said Anna Everett, “I’ve noticed that, and I’d really like to know why not? I should think you would be just the one to go, Carroll, since you feel so sure about death.”

“Oh, I don’t like to go,” replied Carroll, easily, “because they are so gloomy, and I get tired of seeing people so melancholy and hopeless who profess something quite different.”

“Don’t you think,” suggested Kate, “that that’s just a little bit selfish, Carroll? As a mark of respect ought you not to sacrifice your feelings at such times?”

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"No, it doesn't seem to me that it is really selfish. I don't know any better guide than the Golden Rule, and in this matter, at least, I follow that."

"Golden Rule?" echoed Edith Styles, who had come among us recently, and probably had not had time to learn of Carroll's "queerness."

"I mean, you needn't feel obliged to come to my funeral, and have a ceremony over this thing I'm going to part with. I don't see why you should make a function at that time, anyway, any more than you would make one over my old clothes which I shall leave at home, next week, when I go visiting, and take my best along with me."

"But it isn't the custom to have functions over old clothes, and it is, over bodies," objected Eunice Sanborn, who was growing into Carroll's way of looking at things, but growing step by step. "And we don't have funerals so much for the sake of those who

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have gone as we do for those who are nearest them. How would your Aunt Sophy feel, if not a person came to your funeral?"

One or two of the girls giggled, but Carroll propped her chin on her hand and gazed thoughtfully at the speaker.

"And yet, upon whom does this funeral business fall hardest?" she said, slowly, thinking it out, in her way. "For whom is it the greatest horror and nightmare? In my case it will be Aunt Sophy. She will shudderingly go through the ordeal because you expect it, and you will shrinkingly come to the function because she expects it; it will have no effect whatever upon me, except to make me weep at so much unhappiness—and what good will it do anyone? Worse than none, for it will do positive harm to each one present because of its emphasizing the wrong thing. Girls—" she paused, weighing the matter before deciding, and then speaking in her quick, posi-

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tive way,—“I’m not going to *have* a funeral!”

Some of us laughed. “What are you going to do—be translated, as Enoch was? ‘He was not, for God took him’?”

“Yes, just that way,” she answered gaily, “exactly that way! And all my friends and my blessed aunt have got to be glad about it, and weep nary one foolish and mistaken tear!”

“I think,” said Kate, “that you are going a little too far, Carroll. This is too serious a matter to jest over. Funerals are dreadful and harrowing and all that, I know, but so is death; and so long as there is death in the world there will be funerals; so it does no good to gird at the custom, nor even to talk about it.”

“Kate,” Carroll said, gently and seriously, “I’m not jesting; I’m absolutely in earnest. Why have funerals got to be? It’s only a custom, and I’ll bet it isn’t a Christian

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custom, at that! Death is dreadful, in the way most people take it, but I truly believe it would lose a great deal of its horror if we did away with all that happens between the actual passing of the spirit, and the grave. Think a minute of the death of anyone you have known, of Mrs. Beebe, whom you have just been talking of, what does your mind image, first of all? Not her real going, not her life now, not even her family's loss—but that painful, emotional, stereotyped ceremony you attended! Death means sorrow, because it means partings; but why do we persist in adding a difficult and gloomy burden to that sorrow? When the parting actually has come, why do we, by custom, force several days of heartrending ceremonial, for it is all ceremonial, every bit of it, upon those who are often worn out physically, and who are mentally unfitted for complying with this last exaction at the hands of society?"

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"I can see," agreed Anna, "how it would be a great relief not to have to go through certain things. I remember when my father died, how heart-breaking seemed the place in which he lay, those two intervening days before the funeral; and what a strain it was to mother to see the friends that came and talked in hushed voices, and wanted to go for a minute into that cold room. We were conscious of that part of the house and what it held, every moment; and the memory of those days and of what happened last of all does stand out, as you say, Carroll. Yet how can such a custom be changed? Who would dare to go against it?"

"I would," said Carroll, "because I believe in changing it, and of course one dares do what one believes in! But you girls will have to do your part, too, if it ever happens; you'll have to help Aunt Sophy!"

Then she evolved a plan, filling in the details as she went along. We listened, half

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captured, half scandalized, but somehow there was no really escaping her magnetism and her joyous assurance.

“Oh, I do hope I shall go first, so you can see how much better that way will be,” she said, at the end. “Of course I’d like to be here and have one of you do it; but then, I guess I can imagine it well enough, and I’d just love to demonstrate it myself!”

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy
power expands? —BROWNING

XXIII

CARROLL was one of those rare persons who can possess vital convictions and ideas without the desire of foisting them upon the whole community, through a mistaken hope of reforming the world. Without any feeling at all that death was too solemn to talk about—for to her it was just as simple and natural a matter as any of the things in our daily experience—her respect for other people's traditions and instincts led her to a reticence maintained with perfect sweetness, except when the subject was broached or invited by others. Consequently it was in a natural and unforced way that she came to outline to me some of her imaginings about what comes after "the end"; for it was a time of real

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need in my own life, and I turned to her instinctively for help.

It was just before I was to have a surgical operation performed at a hospital, and as the case was considered serious and the outcome very uncertain, I found myself full of foreboding and anxiety.

Carroll spent the day before the operation at the hospital with me. Her sympathy for my state of mind was genuine, and it helped me, but even then it was the knowledge of her own "queer" convictions that was most comforting.

"Do you suppose I'll live, Carroll?" I asked, in the futile way one does, because of the desire to hear reassuring words, though one knows they can be words only.

"Yes, I do, Theodora. You're strong and sturdy, and I don't believe you'll let go your grip," she encouraged me, staunchly.

"I suppose you, in my place, wouldn't mind a bit?" I asked, weakly smiling.

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"Oh, yes; I'd mind the discomfort, and the sickness—and the expense!" she added, ruefully. Carroll always had to think of expense.

"But, if the worst should happen—Oh, Carroll, I am not ready to leave this beautiful world, this beautiful, beautiful world, full of its human joys and hopes and aspirations! There are so many things I want to do and accomplish, so many lovely things I want to take part in and experience. I have hardly begun to live yet; I can't bear to think of leaving it all!"

"But you won't have to leave it all; not in any case!" urged Carroll. "You are you, and you'll always be you, and you'll keep your ability to live and enjoy to the full, even if you don't come out of the ether into this world."

"Oh, of course," I said, drearily, "Heaven, and that sort of thing; but I want the gaiety and joy of the flesh—of this life."

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Carroll looked at me with those thoughtful, puzzled eyes, trying to get just my point of view, so that she could put her own more clearly.

“By ‘Heaven’ do you mean something vague and hazy and wishy-washy?” she asked, as usual failing to temper her words to the shorn lamb which I had been brought up to consider all “religious” subjects. “You don’t imagine that we’ll be less gay and light-hearted than we are now, do you? That having once been vivid in experience, we shall attain to a featureless, flaccid existence? How could we? It is because we are vivid, because we have that wonderful sense of undying aliveness that we are justified in believing that sense is indestructible.”

I agreed, but still half-heartedly, resignedly, as we do, perforce, at mortal crises of our lives.

“Yes, I suppose that is so; and that we

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shall be blessed, which Carlyle says is better than being merely happy, and all that. But, Carroll, though you'd think I would be glad at the idea of rest and peace, yet somehow—"

"Why, of course you aren't!" she interrupted. "Who that is full of life is enamored of the idea of perpetual inaction? I am sure that's not what *I* want. I want life, activity, problems,—yes, even perplexities and puzzles and buffetings—everything that makes up the round sum of real living; and there will be plenty of these, I'm sure, all the way along."

"Oh, Carroll, you make it sound almost interesting; but how could there be problems up there?"

"Oh, Theodora, I don't make it sound one-millionth as 'interesting' as I know it is going to be! What makes you think it is 'up there,' at all? And who would care a rap for it if the answers were all given before—

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hand, or if we were going to hibernate or turn into a kind of sanctified jelly-fish?"

"Well, granting even that," I said, after a pause, "activity is not all I want. I have to confess to desires and satisfactions that lie on a lower plane. I want to be gay, as I am here, in this world; I want to sing and dance and ride horseback and skate and go to the theater and read books! I suppose you can't understand such a groveling list of pleasure and state of mind, when I ought to be repeating the Penitential Psalm; but I'm trying to speak the truth for once, the poor, real, miserable truth."

Carroll laughed. "I don't see why you should call those things of a low order. Who knows what is high or low? For my part, I'd hate to pull everything to pieces and decide, for they're all lovely, though so different. It's enjoyment that counts—whether it comes from looking at a wonderful prospect from a mountain top, or hear-

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ing a symphony, or walking in a splendid wind, or swimming in the big sea, or moving to music in a ballroom, or touching the hand of a friend who loves you. Every single one of them makes your eyes shine and a glow come to you at the thought of the beauty of life, and causes something in you say and to feel 'Thank God!' And that is the root of the whole matter," added Carroll, meditatively. "God, or whatever you may call the splendid Intelligence that devised all these things—soft air and mountain tops, and wind and water and snow and ice, and human throat instrument for singing, and ear for music, and pleasure in rhythm, and joy in exercise and games and striving, and heart for loving—that Intelligence is at the bottom of it, and has proven such a marvelous Originator and Inventor and Planner for possibilities of enjoyment, right now, that I don't see how we can, in reason, distrust His ability to keep on. I,

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for my part, am willing to risk it, and just expect fine and splendid surprises—as that first northern winter was full of undreamed of sports and pleasures for my little cousin John, when he came up from Cuba.”

“But spirit—spirit can’t enjoy the things I mean; spirit couldn’t!”

“How do you know? It’s spirit that does the enjoying now, isn’t it? And it’s rather dangerous to say what can or can’t happen beyond the limit of our own experience. That, too, reminds me of John’s preconceived ideas, and how they were upset. Do you remember about him?”

“Not in any such connection as this,” I answered, listlessly.

“Well, you know his father was a planter there; and when he and my aunt took vacations and came up to “the States,” they always left the children at home, so that John was twelve when he first went to Canada for the winter.

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“They had told him how in the northern winter the water becomes solid, so that it would bear one’s weight. He has told me since how he used to puzzle over that one statement, and think, ‘Why, it can’t be so; at least, not our kind of water; it stands to reason it isn’t so!’ And yet his parents, who made the assertion, had actually been there and seen it! I suppose he would have been more skeptical still if they hadn’t seen it themselves, and had only deduced it from their knowledge of physics. Then, John loved his home and didn’t want to leave it for the northern school at all. He says he just knew that would be the end of his fun. He used to ask if the northern boys went swimming all the year round, and had coral to dive for, and could go barefooted all the time, and had the same tropical fruits to eat that he had in Cuba: and when he was told they didn’t do and have exactly these things,

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but had just as much fun in other ways—sleighing, snow-balling, tobogganing, skeeing, and so on—he was awfully melancholy, and felt exactly as you do now, Theodora; said he s'posed he'd enjoy it, but that was because he would be older and different and wouldn't expect to have fun any more.

“And he was the most surprised boy, when he found that ‘up north’ he was just as much of a rollicking harum-scarum as ever—really more so, because the bracing air whipped his blood into circulation and gave him a zest and keenness for enjoyment he had never known before, and life was jollier than he had ever dreamed.”

“That's very nice,” I said, half sadly, “if it were a true analogy. But of course you're only imagining there's any similitude.”

“Why, of course I am!” said Carroll, brightly. “I don't know what it's going to be. All I mean by speaking of John is, that our experiences right now are full of

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surprises and apparent contradictions to reason, and so we needn't, if we don't want to, assume that existence without the flesh means some kind of blessed, impersonal inanity! I expect the kind of happiness that you call gayety, of course. Is that big element of my nature going to be dropped, all at once—that almost nicest part of it, that God put there Himself? Then I wouldn't be Carroll Page!"

That evening several different people came in to see me, and they all talked kindly and encouragingly. And my mother was tender and consoling and hopeful, and the nurses were angels of sweetness and light. But none of these had so much effect in removing apprehension and dread from the dark hour into which I walked the next day, as had that thought given me by the "atheistic" Carroll—of the originality and competence of the "Splendid Intelligence" that had made my life here so sweet.

Art thou poor, and hast thou golden slumbers,

O sweet Content

—T. DEKKER

XXIV

WHEN I said that Carroll's impulsive nature led her into one serious pitfall, I was thinking of her marriage. She never by word or sign acknowledged that it had been a mistake, and out of loyalty to what I know would have been her wishes I must touch as lightly as I can on this experience of her life.

It is sufficient to say that he was a cripple, and that this affliction served to Carroll as a veil hiding his moral unsoundness, and eliciting her headlong, all-giving sympathy, and all her tenderness. He was also a musician, and had the articulate artistic temperament; so that he undoubtedly made the most of the fact that his deformity cut him off from

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many of the natural pleasures of life, and did it with a poignant dramatic force that must especially have appealed to the girl who so loved life in all its fullness and richness. All this I merely guess at, having known her as I did, and so having been able to picture the kind of man who would naturally have won her heart. What everyone knew about the matter was that she started by being his champion against the rest of us, feeling that our judgments were harsh and unjust, and ended by marrying him.

They began housekeeping on the outskirts of the town, and Carroll carried into the poverty of this new life the same light-heartedness and capacity for enjoyment that had marked her girlhood. I remember going to her one morning to carry some message or invitation from "the old crowd," and finding her flushed, and a little tired-looking, hammering away at some boxes in the middle of the kitchen. She sank down

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on the floor, Turk fashion, as I entered, and pushing back the damp rings of hair from her forehead, looked up with the old redoubtable smile.

“Oh, Theodora!” she exclaimed, in a nice way she had that seemed to say my coming was the one thing she most wanted, “it’s wonderful, the things one can do with boxes and barrels! This is a dressing-table that I am fabricating now. Isn’t it going to be a darling? And just come and see the book-cases I’ve made, and the barrel chair!”

She led me into the small parlor, and gaily indicated the results of her labors.

“This I actually made all myself,” she said, pointing with pride to a very good-looking library table, and running her hand caressingly over its smooth brown surface. I did every bit of it, planning and planing, sawing and finishing; and I’m prouder of it than of any canvas I ever dabbled paint over!”

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"But you are tired, Carroll, dear!" I expostulated, as I had done when we were little girls and she was stacking wood. "You work all the time, now, and don't ever give yourself recreation. Oh, if you only had a little more of this world's goods!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" scouted Carroll, briskly. "People who have money to go and buy whatever they fancy, all made, don't get half the pleasure that those do who have to contrive. It's such fun to make something out of nothing!"

"You're a hopeless optimist!" I laughed. "If you had lots of funds, I know you would think that *that* was the best thing on earth!"

"Well, I daresay I should try to look on the bright side of it," admitted Carroll, with one of her contagious chuckles, "but I can be just exactly as happy looking on the bright side of this. So what's the difference?"

Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children.

—KEATS

XXV

THERE had been a peculiarly atrocious murder committed in Detroit that year. The criminal had been tried and convicted, and was sentenced to be hanged "sometime in the week beginning December 13." It was during that week that some of us were sitting together, one day, in Carroll's little box of a parlor, embroidering towels for Kate Pearson's trousseau, according to the unconventional but helpful custom of our little group; and, in a lull in our desultory talk, Eunice sighed and said:

"I wonder if that man Morrison was executed to-day?"

"Hope not," responded Kate; "I hope

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he's got another day or two to dread it in. Nothing could be bad enough for him!"

"It must be the worst punishment possible, though," I ruminated, "to be sentenced in that way, with no definite time mentioned; to wake up each morning wondering, 'Will it be to-day?'—to live through each waking minute and hour, not knowing how many more there will be before one is led off to the block and the black cap."

"I read somewhere," contributed Anna, "that in a way we are all sentenced criminals, all doomed to death, only not knowing the appointed date. And it's so, girls, isn't it? We've all got to pay the penalty just as surely as this Morrison has, and we and he are almost equally in the dark as to the exact time—the only difference being that he knows it must come this week, and we don't know whether for us it will be this week or next, or later."

"I never thought of it that way before,"

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I reflected. "Isn't it a wonder we can be so happy and cheerful when we know this sentence is hanging over our heads?"

"I suppose Carroll doesn't feel that way at all?" questioned Eunice, looking up wistfully.

Carroll did not seem inclined to talk.

"Well, naturally," she said, finally, as we all waited for her to answer, "it wouldn't make me perfectly miserable to know, each morning when I woke up, that I might be going that day on a new expedition—to have an interesting adventure. It all depends on the way you look at it. You can call it a 'sentence of death,' and be lugubrious, or you can call it the promise of a matchless excursion, and be gay."

"Carroll is cross," said Kate.

"I don't mean to be," Carroll replied; "but it seems to me that people go out of their way trying to make that whole subject painful. Whoever it was that thought

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out the metaphor Anna just quoted, that we are 'all sentenced criminals, not knowing the date of our execution'—I read it, too—must be a morbid neurasthenic, and ought to be ashamed of himself for putting one more stumbling-block of melancholy suggestion in his fellow-mortals' way."

"Bravo!" applauded Kate. "If it's only a matter of words, and not facts, he deserves your censure."

"Facts!" exclaimed Anna, impatiently. "Even the word is an impertinence in this connection. The whole thing is nothing but conjecture, and is bound to be so to the end of time!"

"I'll tell you what I wish," said Kate. "I wish the idea of Heaven seemed at least desirable to me. It doesn't, and I can't make it."

"Well," Eunice advanced, with unusual independence, "did you ever happen to think how much more beautiful it may be

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than we can even guess at? I heard a sermon not long ago that gave me a new idea. The point of it was that we haven't any means of comparing this life and the life to come; that all our objects for making the parallel are probably entirely inadequate. The illustration given was of a boy born in a mine. When they tried to tell him about the world above the air shaft his conception of it would have to be formed by picturing such images as he was familiar with in the only place he knew—the dark and gloomy cavern, thousands of feet away from light and pure air and sunshine. They would tell him that overhead was a sky of shining blue, with the glorious sun for its light; and he would imagine something like the dim shadowy arches of the mine, with the smoking yellow mine-lantern giving off its murky rays. They would tell him of a carpet of green, soft grass, and of growing flowers; and he would pic-

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ture the damp, cold floor of the mine, with its slippery green slime, and its tufts of fungus here and there in the ooze. They would speak of rivers and brooks and of the sea; and the only water he could use for comparison would be the dank, poisonous pools in the bottom of the mine. So you see, no matter how faithfully he tried to multiply his dimensions and beautify his images, his picture would be a vague replica of the world under the surface of the earth; absolutely and entirely different from the beautiful glowing world up here that he had never seen."

"That must suit you down to the ground, Carroll," I said, as no one else spoke for a minute after Eunice finished.

"Well," Carroll had dropped her work, and sat still, thinking; "I like the cheerfulness of it, but it suggests an idea of remoteness that doesn't quite appeal to me. I hope he meant it only figuratively; that he

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wasn't thinking of the beauties of any actual distant and unknown place, when he spoke of that Heaven so unlike this earth. Personally, I don't think of the life that simply *goes on* as being so different as that from the life we are now living, or of the place it goes on in as being so far away. The eyes of the spirit may see it as being more beautiful than it is to us, but I always feel, somehow, as if it were likely to be right here. Why shouldn't that be the natural thing?"

"How could it be?" I remonstrated. Then I laughed a little. "Spirits would be awfully crowded and elbowed if they settled down amongst so many objects and commodities as this earth is full of. I should think they'd need more room—that they wouldn't want to be jostled!"

"Frivolous!" said Kate, *sotto voce*.

"We don't know much about spirit and its laws," persisted Carroll, "but we do know something about material bodies; and

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among other things we know that many forms of animal life exist here, side by side, and go their separate ways and live their whole lives, utterly unconscious of each other's presence. We are not 'crowded and elbowed' by millions of tiny living things which we know of only theoretically; and as for them, I don't suppose they ever dream that they aren't the only inhabitants of the earth and air. Very likely even that big little animal, the ant, never thinks of us as fellow beings; if we enter its life at all, it is as unconquerable forces—as when one of our feet crushes out a hundred of them at once; and the ant, in turn, is an inconceivable giant to myriads of smaller creatures invisible to our eyes. And so, if unknown to each other there exist so many different worlds of animal life, all about us, it seems the simplest thing possible that still another world may be right here, unseen, as we are unseen by the creatures of the microscope

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—perhaps sometimes dimly felt. I like that idea better than that of a distant Heaven; though I'm not afraid of being lonesome, wherever it is, for it's sure to be interesting!"

Some sunny spell
To dissipate the shadows.

—KEATS

XXVI

THIS was during the first year of their marriage. The next, they went “’way out west” to live, in a town in Nebraska. Richard had relatives there, and it was one of the traits of his unstable nature to love change. I always thought, too, that he was jealous of Carroll’s pleasure in her friends, and that he wanted to get her away from the place she knew and loved. If that was so, it showed how little he really knew Carroll, for no transplanting could crush her sense of pleasure in her surroundings; that she carried with her and it was indestructible.

We heard little about them. Carroll’s

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letters gave almost no information as to the outward circumstances of her life. Two years after they went away I visited them, unasked. I was saddened by the great change in Carroll's looks. She was pale and thin and almost wan; but there was a steady brightness in her eyes, she was childishly excited over my visit, and she gaily brushed aside all my anxious inquiries. On Richard's appearance, too, I saw with almost equal concern, because of his connection with my friend, his sins had begun to make deep impress. In the clouded eyes, the shaking hand, the mottled complexion, I saw evidences only too clear of the life he had been leading; and still Carroll was silent, even with me, the friend who loved her best.

Only once during my visit did she give any hint of the uphill road she was traveling, and that was the morning after a dreadful night when he was brought home help-

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less, bestial. On that morning she asked me to cut my visit short and go at once. She made no flimsy excuses; she knew I would understand, and I suppose she hoped I would hold my peace about it. In this she was disappointed.

"Oh, Carroll!" I cried, "why did it have to be this way? Why couldn't life have been beautiful for you, as it is for me?"

"Why, Theodora Starkweather, life *is* beautiful for me! The little flecks—I don't have to hold them between me and the sun all the time, do I? And then," she added, smiling, "the nicest thing of all I can never lose; the consciousness, at the background of all my thoughts—especially if I ever get a little discouraged or upset by things that seem to go wrong—that something nice is going to happen further on; that no one can keep me from that, anyway! Just as, when I was a little girl, if I knew that I was to go to a party or a picnic later in the

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week, I could do all the small, irksome 'chores,' and run the endless errands, and work at the stupid lessons, quite cheerfully, because of the pleasant thing in store."

"And the pleasant thing in this case is Heaven?"

"Well, not in the sense of something surveyed, mapped out. No. I think rather of the unknown Afterwards, the next Event, the Land of Finding Out—the Great Adventure that's before us all."

Never strike sail to a fear—
Come into port greatly.

—EMERSON

XXVII

AFTER that, we heard almost nothing from them for six years. Now and then there floated to us some rumor about Richard, that his weaknesses were growing upon him, that he was sinking lower and lower in the scale of being, becoming more and more the slave of his appetites. Now and then came a disturbing report in regard to Carroll's health; that over-work and deprivations and neglect were taking their toll of her. Then came news of Richard's death; and after that Carroll came back to us.

It is with a strange commingling of

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eagerness and reluctance that I approach the account of those last happy months of Carroll's life, when, worn out and poor and mortally ill, she came back to Detroit to be with her own again. The eagerness comes from a deep desire to share with others that happy memory; the reluctance, from a fear that I may not be able to portray exactly as it was the atmosphere of wholesomeness and sunshine that pervaded that entire time, and makes it look, in the retrospect, like a bright Indian summer. Carroll did not convey the slightest idea of the dying heroine; there was, in fact, such an unsentimental every-dayness about her, that when we speak to each other now of that wonderful time, we would explain, if questioned, that the wonderfulness lay in the naturalness of it all—in our entire freedom from any sense of approaching calamity, in the absence of gloom, of conventional slurrings over, of euphemistic phrases, of

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thin disguises. Carroll had come home to die, and we knew from the first that the time could not be far off. But it was the most marvelous time of waiting conceivable, because it was from beginning to end so unaffectedly pleasant and so full of simple good-cheer.

And not from Eastern windows only
—CLOUGH

XXVIII

WE were shocked at first, when we saw the plain little face so colorless and worn, as if the iron gauntlet of cruel circumstance had passed over it, erasing all the girlish contours and tints. But the eagerness remained; Carroll's eyes, even though set in that dimmed, whitened face, were the same expectant, interested eyes as of old; observing alertly the details of the passing panorama of life, searching for its gay and cheerful things, finding each new page as full of charm and novelty as they had twenty years before.

Almost immediately upon her return she took to her room, at Miss Sophia Page's, and even to the couch, under the window.

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Our tender pity, our affectionate solicitude, fell back shamefaced and embarrassed before her gay courage and commonplace acceptance of facts. She found her lack of strength amusing but not sad.

“Isn’t it too *funny* for me to be lying here in elegance, like a veritable Camille?” she said, by way of breaking the ice, at the first visit of “our crowd”; women, now, of thirty and over, with families and cares, and some crows’ feet and grayness, but “girls” still to one another.

Carroll’s room was such a cheerful place that it became at once a favorite gathering-point for us all. Invalids, especially those who are known to be almost through with life, are often the objects of tender devotion, and the recipients of kindly calls and loving attentions; but such visits are likely to be made from a sense of duty, and in the face of an instinctive feeling almost of reluctance. To Carroll’s room, on the con-

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trary, we flocked, not from altruism, but because it gave *us* pleasure. We were merry there, and yet it was not because of dodging the facts of the case. That would not have been Carroll's way.

"Isn't it *wonderful*," she said to us, in her old, underscoring manner, "isn't it wonderful to think how soon it's really going to happen, and to me! Girls, can you actually believe it?"

I recalled a time when, long ago, she had said that she could "hardly wait"; the "hardly wait" look was in her face now.

"Oh, Carroll," said Kate, "you talk as if you were in a hurry to leave us!"

"I don't mean it that way," answered Carroll, with quick compunction. "You know I've always said I'd be in a hurry if I weren't having such a good time here that I didn't want to miss any of it. But now it seems, by the way Dr. Brown shakes his head and looks at Aunt Sophy and won't an-

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swer my questions—funny old thing!—as if I'd had about all of it that is allotted to me; and I'm just enough of a little girl yet to be curious and eager about the 'what next?' When it's decided that you're really going somewhere, you know, and you are all packed and waiting on the station platform for your train, it's natural, isn't it, to be looking up the track to be getting the first glimpse of the locomotive? But of course," she added, smiling, "you're just as interested in the friends who have come to the train with you, as ever you were; and you love them more than ever, if anything!"

How good is man's life, the mere living.—BROWNING

XXIX

ONE day when I was with her alone, someone downstairs—it was Mary Royce, who used her great musical gift generously for her friends' pleasure—began to sing that little song of Riley's—"There, little girl, don't cry"—that is a favorite with most people, and the words came up to us distinctly, as we listened, in the room above.

I considerably refrained from looking Carroll's way, while the song was in progress, it seemed to fit her so perfectly—the broken doll, and the promise of the better things of youth; the broken slate, and the hope held out of compensating life and love to come; and for fulfillment of all hopes and promises—what?

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There, little girl, don't cry! They have broken your
heart, I know,
And the rainbow gleams of your youthful dreams,
Are things of the long ago.
But Heav'n holds all for which you sigh,
There, little girl, don't cry!

I glanced shyly, almost apprehensively towards her, when the last notes had been sung. To my surprise, instead of being immersed in the gentle melancholy that I felt sure the tender little song must have evoked, I found a frown on her forehead, and a very unspiritual expression on her face.

"What an absurd song!" she said, impatiently. "Why on earth do people choose to sing such gloomy, depressing things, let alone write them?"

"Why," I exclaimed, aghast, "it isn't meant that way, Carroll!"

"Well, it's sung that way, anyway," she insisted, "with the most dribbling sentimentality in voice and inflection. I'll bet there

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are tears in Mary's eyes now, while she is closing the piano!"

"But it tries to be hopeful, religious," I argued, idiotically. "'Heaven holds all for which you sigh'; that's what you say, Carroll."

"No, I don't," Carroll said, stubbornly. "I don't say Heaven holds *all*; I say earth holds loads of good things, and Heaven only keeps on. And it isn't 'religious' to be dissatisfied with the things we have right now; it's unappreciative and ungrateful. If I were as disappointed in all the experiences of earth as that song indicates, I'd have little hope of attaining happiness in the Keeping-On Land. The analogy in it is awful. The little girl is broken-hearted—but youth is going to make up; youth disappoints her—but love will make up; love proves a fiasco—but Heaven will make up. You see what Heaven is going to do, to be logical!"

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"Well, it's so, of the earth part, anyway," I insisted.

Carroll laughed. "You're a goose, Theodora. I don't think it is so, even of the earth part. Of course the doll gets broken; why shouldn't it? Childhood tires of dolls and throws them away for more grown-up things to play with. The child in this song is like a chicken sighing because it has left the shell!"

Of course I had been talking merely for the sake of talking. Now, however, when I became really serious, and expressed the platitudinous "lesson" in words, I said, it seemed, the very worst thing of all.

"You know as well as I do, Carroll, that the meaning of the little poem is absolutely incontestable: that the things of earth are not really satisfying; that we must wait for another life for unalloyed enjoyment and happiness."

"Oh, bosh!" she exclaimed, with more ir-

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ritation than she often showed; "if we can't enjoy the lovely things of now, how can we hope to enjoy the things of then? One has got to get fun as one goes along, and we're just as surely going along now as we shall be going along then. That's a silly song!"

We feel that we are greater than we know.

—WORDSWORTH

XXX

SOMETIMES one human being may suppose, for a score of years, that he knows another well, and then only by chance find out that he has been living all that time in complete ignorance of that other's real interests and vital problems. I never guessed that Anna Everett's fear of death as the end of all things had been the underlying horror and dread of her whole life, until it came out one morning in Carroll's room, when we had all been talking and laughing for an hour like foolish school-girls. Then, suddenly, little Ellen White sobered down and exclaimed,

“Oh, Carroll, you must get well! I can't give you up and feel that you are really going to leave us! You seem the most

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alive person I ever knew; I can't even think of you as being any other way."

"You don't have to, and won't have to, Ellen dear," Carroll replied, deeply touched, as she always was, at the exhibition of any personal feeling towards herself.

"Do you mean you think you can get well, even yet?" asked Ellen, eagerly.

Carroll made a wry little face and shook her head.

"Not the way you mean. This body, I guess, is too ragged and faded and worn thin in spots, for me to be able to do much more with it. But look here, Ellen," she said, holding out her hand, "if this hand were to be cut off, here at the wrist, and carried out of the room, would you follow it sadly, thinking it was any part of me?"

"Of course not," answered little Ellen.

"Well, if it were taken off at the elbow, would you? or at the shoulder? No? I—the I that you think of as being alive, as

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you say,—am something quite distinct from hand or arm or foot or any other part of this anatomy, am I not? So why are you so over-anxious about this old body's getting well? Though I don't want to speak of it disrespectfully; it has done me many a good turn, first and last."

Little Ellen pondered, gazing at her friend.

"The real You," she said; "it's the question of the ages. When I say or think *You*, I have the image of this form of yours, and your face and eyes and smile; as you say, each one or all might be eliminated, and *You* would not be touched; and yet, how we love the visible presence of those we care for!"

"I often wish our eyes were provided with more powerful lenses," said Carroll; "think how inferior their scope is even to that of the camera! If they were a million times stronger than that, very likely the

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real You could see the real Me. I wonder what it would be like?"

"Nothing I'd like to look at half so much as I do this that I see right now; I know that!" Ellen replied, doggedly.

"Pooh!" scoffed Carroll, "I suppose that's what a caterpillar may say to a caterpillar friend, but I'll bet when he sees him later as a golden-winged butterfly they both have a laugh over his former absurdity."

"Carroll, leave off romancing," Anna broke in, out of a brown study, "and talk to me about something that has always troubled me. I've never been afraid of the place of torment and eternal punishment that my creed dwells upon; I feel sure such things can't be, if there's a good God. But it seems to me all analogy points to an *end*, at the end of life; to our little breath of individuality and consciousness going out altogether, like the life of a plant or an animal."

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"Like the life of a plant or an animal," Carroll repeated slowly, to herself.

"Why, yes; they die—and that's the end of them. You admit that, don't you?"

"I don't know," she answered, still thoughtful. "How can we tell?"

"Oh, well, that's foolish!" Anna cried, impatiently. "Why should we think, then, that we alone keep on, when everything else lives its little span, and then perishes? There's a terribly weak spot in what you've just been saying to Ellen; and at that spot lies much of my doubt and fear about the continuance of life. The hand may be removed, the foot, large portions of the body, as you say, without affecting the identity; but how about the brain? Each tiniest thought is represented by a corresponding change in the brain matter; without the action of the brain, where would be that 'I' you were speaking of? Injure the tissues of the brain in a certain way—and though

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life may keep on, one's individual consciousness is lost. What is the 'I' but the mind, and what is the mind but brain-process? And brain is as material as the dust, and it will return to dust!"

"Then *I* am my brain?" asked Carroll, interestedly.

"Well, if thought has its origin in cellular changes in the brain? And if its origin is a cell, its life ends with the cell's life, doesn't it?"

"I don't believe anyone alive knows which comes first, the brain-process or the thought," said Carroll, taking the bit in her teeth. "They must be so nearly simultaneous that very likely it can't be proven, either way—which is the cause, and which the effect."

"But if it is proven—if it should be—" urged Anna, with a lingering hope in her friend's ability to "see through" things.

"I—I—I—" Carroll repeated softly to

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herself, as if she were trying, by audible expression, to straighten things out and properly to locate this mysterious and elusive personality.

Then her face cleared and she looked up smiling.

“Well, Anna,” she said, “I don’t see such an immense stumbling-block there. ‘I’ am not my hand, but I use my hand; I couldn’t hold this material book without it. ‘I’ am not my heart, but I use my heart; I couldn’t pump the blood through this physical body without it. I use my lungs; I couldn’t aerate and purify this blood without them. And so, in the same way, it seems to me, ‘I’ am not my brain, but I use my brain; probably I couldn’t get thoughts to this physical consciousness without it. But I believe it does the machine part of the thought merely; that ‘I’ am the owner of the brain, and the author of the thought; that, though the brain and the other bodily

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organs seem essential to my perfect adjustment to this physical world, yet above and behind all these organs and processes sits the 'I' enthroned,—imperishable, undying! Most likely not scientific, O Anna of little faith, but satisfactory to me!"

"But—if the brain is injured—"

"Machine out of order," interrupted Carroll. "Here, I'll tell you what it's like. It's like a telegrapher's outfit in a pioneer country far from supplies. The instrument and the wires are indispensable in getting a message to the outside world. The wires, however, can be injured, and even broken, without necessarily cutting off the usefulness of the apparatus; for they can sometimes be mended or replaced, or the receiver may make connection at a nearer point. But injure the sending instrument itself, and no correct messages will go unless it can be repaired, which often is impossible, owing to the lack of facilities in

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that crude country. The operator may try to tap out the words and sentences he wishes to send, but the machine is out of order—they won't go at all, or they'll go all mixed and garbled. Do one thing more: remove the electricity, and not even a garbled message can be sent. The apparatus is of no further use. But what argument is there in that, that there are not hundreds of messages lying ready to be sent, or that the operator himself is not as hale and hearty as ever? He may have to wait until he can deliver those messages in person—that is all.

“Just suppose, of two operators who have never seen each other, one grows to love the messages and the thoughts that are tapped out to him by the other, becomes quite bound up in the sense of companionship they have over the wires. Then something happens; dots and dashes that come to him are all blurry and illegible, and finally

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cease. He can't get the other instrument to answer. He wrings his hands. He says, 'My friend is broken and spoiled and destroyed! I shall never hear from him again!' Foolish! Oughtn't he to know that, as he himself is not identical with his instrument, but is its master, the person who 'uses' it—so his friend also is not a helpless mechanism, but is the living operator on it? And instead of deducing from the fact that the instrument has ceased to respond to him that his friend has perished, ought he not rather to surmise the truth—that that friend has been released from the necessity of expressing himself by means of steel, and copper wire, and may soon now communicate with him face to face; as soon as he himself, in turn, is released from service at his own post of duty, for freer and larger self-expression?"

I built my soul a lordly pleasure house.—TENNYSON

XXXI

ONCE, in those last days, I remember saying to her, after some trifling mishap to certain plans I had made,

“Oh, well, that is always the way! One ought to learn ‘never to expect anything, and one will never be disappointed.’ ”

“I never agreed with that,” she replied. “My motto is, ‘Expect everything of everything, and you won’t be disappointed!’ Because something is always bound to come true, you see!”

“Oh, Carroll!” I cried, in a sudden gust of passionate pity for her, who cherished so loyally and wore so gallantly the rags and tatters of life that had been her por-

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tion, "can you say that, sincerely? Have you always been so happy?"

She looked at me thoughtfully, chin propped in hand, in the old way.

"I know what you mean, Theodora," she said, "and perhaps it is just as well not to ignore it, this once. 'Happy' is a badly used little word," she went on, after a pause. "When one speaks of a happy life, one almost invariably means a life surrounded by outwardly harmonious circumstances. Looked at in that way, possibly, my life wouldn't be reckoned a particularly happy one. But can you truly say it has not been so? To me, to be interested is to be happy; and I've always been interested, always looking forward to something. I've never got over thinking life is wonderful. I almost believe I've been the very happiest, really, of all our crowd."

"You have been so because you have taken things that way," I retorted. "If

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beautiful realities had been given you, don't you think they, with your contented spirit, would have made you doubly blest?"

"Contentment! That reminds me of a browsy little lamb, nibbling in a pasture! My kind of happiness seems to me a very different thing from that; it means looking over all the fences and between all the bars, and being immensely interested in every surrounding meadow and distant mountain and flying bird. It's positive enjoyment, not negative passivity. Of course, Theodora, I don't know what 'might have been'; I only know this—that so far as my observation goes, we'd be just about as happy as we are, no matter how differently we'd been placed!"

"I'll grant that riches and poverty are not the gauges of satisfaction," I conceded. "But—forgive me, Carroll—but don't you think everyone is agreed that an ideal marriage is essential to a woman's inmost sense

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of fulfillment? That there is all the difference in the world between having that one perfect, congenial companionship—and being without it?”

“I should think,” said Carroll, with her infectious laugh, yet thoughtfully, too, “it might be easier to be happy, with such a big stepping-stone to it. But I doubt if the quality of the happiness, once attained, is not just as livably satisfactory in one case as another. Why, Theodora—I don’t usually like to be personal—but look at Kate Pearson, with her nice husband and her beautiful home and those darling children; wouldn’t anyone say she must be flawlessly happy? And yet I truly don’t believe she ever knows a really satisfied hour. She is annoyed because Jack has to be away so much, worried to distraction about the children’s small ailments, uneasy even when she looks in the glass for fear she’ll see a line or a gray hair!”

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"But those are such little things! Underneath she has the solid foundation of joy itself."

"That's just the point. She has the thing you say is the foundation, but—is she happy? What is happiness? Having a reason for it, or being so? Wouldn't you rather, if the choice were given you, feel light-hearted all the time, as I do, than always be distressed and harassed and nervous, even if there were ten thousand 'solid foundations' underneath?"

*I would hate that death bandaged my eyes
And bade me creep past!*

—BROWNING

XXXII

GRADUALLY and quite unconsciously, we grew more and more into Carroll's way of looking upon the time that for her was now coming with swift feet, and, later on, for us all. So that when one day the minister, old Mr. Beebe, told her that he thought her bright way of talking about her death was sacrilegious, there was not one of us who did not smile a little, and feel that we understood her better than he. Her "queerness," in fact, was beginning to permeate our own attitude.

But those who did not know her so well were still shocked by her gaiety and light-heartedness. I remember Helen Dean's

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bewilderment when she came in one day, towards the last, and found Carroll propped up against her pillows—she could no longer get to the couch by the window—her cheeks flushed, and her hands hot with the fever that was consuming her, looking with eager, absorbed attention at dozens of bright samples of silk, from which one of the girls was trying to select a gown.

“Oh, my dear Mrs. Kennedy, how sweet of you to try to show an interest in these trivial things when you are so ill!” cried Mrs. Dean, glancing towards the rest of us with meaning disapproval.

“Sweet of me? Not a bit!” was the characteristic answer, given with all the old emphasis. “I think it’s *fun* to be right in the midst of things, up to the very last!”

No sadness of farewell . . .

—TENNYSON

XXXIII

ONE afternoon several of us walked up to the house together. We were very silent and looked apprehensively at the door as we approached, fearing, as we had feared each day for a week, that the nameless thing had happened. Miss Page met us in the hall.

“Don’t stay long, girls,” she said, in a low tone. “She must not talk very much. The doctor thinks she cannot last through the night.”

We went upstairs with a strange feeling, strange because it was not terrified, nor even wholly sad. We knew we should find her smiling, as usual, and that there would be no solemn hush, no mournful recognition of a tragic end.

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"Oh, girls!" she called out, before we fairly entered, "have you heard? Has Aunt Sophy told you?"

"Yes, Carroll, dear," I answered for us all; and then added, because I could not help it, "and you are not a bit sorry—nor afraid—even now?"

She smiled at me, a gay twinkling smile.

"You know better than to ask that, Theodora! But I'll tell you the way I do feel. I feel awfully, tremendously excited! I never dreamed I should be so stirred up about it; but it does seem so incredible, and so splendid, that I am actually just about to start, at last, on the Great Adventure!"

"If you could only be here, yourself, to cheer us up after you go!" cried Eunice, in sudden realization of our coming need. "There's no one else can comfort us about it, as you could!"

"What a dear, funny thing to think of!" Carroll said, brightly. "I certainly am

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glad you girls think you will miss me; it's lovely to be missed. But please don't do it with lowered voices and averted eyes; and don't do it in the past tense when it isn't absolutely necessary; 'Carroll was' sounds so—so dead and gone!"

We talked a little more, then, heeding Miss Page's sign that we had stayed long enough, we rose to go. It was hard; yet in spite of our sadness she had communicated to us something of her own feeling of elation and expectation.

Then, as we stopped to say good-bye, she said, looking up at us with shining eyes that I shall never forget:

"You know, girls, that I shall be gone away before you come to the house again. This is the last time I shall see your faces, and this is the last time you'll see mine, for awhile. And you know I am going to throw something away—something that is worn out, and that I've no more use for—

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and it is beautiful, the way things are going to be; for Aunt Sophy has promised, like the precious old darling she is—haven't you, dear?—to do things just as I want them. Do you remember what I decided about this, years ago? Well, you just see if you don't like it! You'll come to see Aunt Sophy to-morrow, won't you? And please think of me, and please talk of me, as having just gone around the corner to find my Great Adventure!"

. . . . With morning faces and with morning
hearts . .

—R. L. STEVENSON

XXXIV

BECAUSE she had requested it, we went together to the house the next day. No crêpe was on the door; the curtains were drawn back, as usual. Miss Page met us, with a still, white light on her face.

“Come up to her room,” she said. “She wanted you to come up there to-day.”

The doors into the parlor were open; we saw no dreadful thing within. We went up the long staircase, and into the bright place where we had seen her last—and wondered. The room was full of Carroll’s presence; a pleasant, sunny room, with the muslin curtains fluttering softly in the spring breeze.

“Oh, Miss Sophy,” I cried, “where is she?”

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"She isn't here," she replied, "and neither is that which she called the 'cast-off garment' which she left behind. She said you would all understand."

We asked her to tell us what she could, and she seemed glad to talk about it.

"She herself went last night, at about eight o'clock," she began. "She had told me exactly what she wanted done afterwards, so we kissed each other at the last, and then she left, for her 'journey.' It almost seems to me now as if the carriage or something came for her then; I can't think of it in the ordinary way. And very soon I left the room, as she'd made me promise to do.—The rest was done quietly, without my presence or help, in the night, and that which she had left behind was taken away. This morning when I came down here I found the room as it is now.—It was a strange way to do; I only did it to please her; but somehow it does make it

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seem as if she had just gone off on a trip. I remember her, and I suppose I always shall, lying here and smiling, and talking about it exactly as if her trunk were all packed and she were just waiting for the time to start.—And this morning she is gone.”

So Miss Sophia Page talked on, in a strange, subdued excitement; it all did not seem like death. I looked at her and thought of her attitude, many years before, when her brother, Carroll's father, had died.

“Then there will be no funeral?” asked one of “the girls,” hardly able to take it in.

“No funeral,” replied Aunt Sophy. “She said I must think of her just as Mrs. Royce did of Mary when she went to Europe to study music. And she laughed—you know that laugh of hers, girls—and said, wouldn't Mary have been provoked if they'd had a funeral over her after she'd sailed away! ‘Why, that would make it seem as though

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I were dead, Aunt Sophy!' she said. Oh, girls, do you believe she knew, and was right?"

"I know, at least," said Kate, "that she has made death seem a different thing to me. I don't believe I shall ever feel about it in the old way again. She was so sure."

"She *is* so sure!" I corrected softly.

In the gleam of the shining rainbow

—E. A. PITTINGER

XXXV

GES, her wish was carried out. There was no dark pall over the house for two days thereafter; no sadness and gloom; no service, in darkened parlors, amidst a hushed gathering of suffering friends around a long dark object—with hopeful words spoken, glorious promises read—and broken-hearted, unbelieving tears falling fast; no hymns of poignant sweetness to stir the depths of emotion; no dreadful drive, slowly, mournfully, to the city of the dead, beyond the confines of the living city; no despairing ceremony and tragic last rites, before an open grave—"dust to dust, ashes to ashes"—words to pierce the very heart of hearts.

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As Carroll had said, our final parting with her came that afternoon in the sunset glow; her leave-taking of the aunt who had been to her like a mother, when the last tender kiss was given and returned by living lips; and after that—we missed her; I have missed her ever since! But no dark and pagan ceremonies stand out in my memory between me and the living Carroll. In my mind the thought of her is connected with no grave. It is easy, it is necessary, to think of her as simply having left us, that day, to encounter new interests, new phases of life and experience. For no doubts or fears of my own can permanently stand their ground against the picture of her happiness at the approach, at last, of her "Great Adventure," and of her going forward to meet it, so joyous, so eager, and so unafraid.

THE END

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